A RECONCILIATION MODEL FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN AN AFRICAN AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCH

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ABSTRACT

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The project context is Beacon Light Missionary Baptist Church in Durham, North Carolina. The hypothesis of this project is that practicing Christians will resolve their disputes among themselves and reconcile relationships when provided biblical instruction on conflict resolution and mediation skill training. The project provides a biblically instructive conflict resolution ministry model that presents conflict as an opportunity for spiritual growth and impetus for change. The qualitative research method was used. Pre and post training questionnaires provided data that suggests an increase in participant base knowledge as opposed to attitude changes as a result of the project ministry model.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer would like to thank her Pastor, the Reverend Dr. Clarence H. Burke, for his then unthinkable suggestion to enter United Theological Seminary's Doctor of Ministry program. During the two and one half year matriculation period, Pastor Burke generously sowed seeds of knowledge, wisdom, and encouragement into the writer that were instrumental in helping her through the program.

The prayers of the Righteous do availeth much. The writer thanks all those who took the time to pray for her, especially the members of the Beacon Light Intercessory Prayer Group, Sister Chavis, Sister Joyner, Brother and Sister Redd, and Minister Taylor. First Lady Syvil Burke, you have always been a friend and always been eager to help me.

Dr. Maureen Collins did not hesitate to say yes when asked if she would be the writer's Professional Associate. She has truly been a God-send. Dr. Jean Moore has been a role model. The writer would like to thank Dr. Moore for taking the time out of a busy schedule to be her Professional Associate.

Lastly, the writher cannot begin to find the words to express appreciation for her Mentors, Dr. Daryl Hairston, Dr. Lucius Dalton and, of course, Dr. Harold Hudson. True to the name of the focus group you mentor, our journey together has been a collaborative effort. The writer congratulates you on your success and prays God's blessings on you as you continue to allow God to use you to shape the twenty-first leaders of the Church.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the late Emmett and Ellarine Mitchell. Thank you Mommy and Daddy for being loving and awesome parents who taught your children: In Christ, nothing is impossible.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

KJV	King James Version of the Holy Bible
NIV	New International Version of the Holy Bible
MCC	Mennonite Central Committee
BCO	The Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church of America

INTRODUCTION

In 2006, Pastor Jones asked both Sister Sally and Sister Martha to plan the Hallelujah Missionary Baptist Church's annual youth program. The two ladies did not work well together and were in constant disagreement over the arrangements and whose ideas were best. Four years later, the ladies still refuse to speak to each other.

It is not uncommon for Deacon Henry and Deacon Smith to strongly disagree about church matters. Everyone knows they have been fighting with each other since Deacon Henry's son left his wife who just happened to be Deacon Smith's daughter. Their relationship has deteriorated so much so that during a recent leadership meeting the two men almost engaged in a physical altercation.

The new choir director recently announced the choir would be singing more contemporary gospel songs and not just traditional hymns. Long time choir members Sister Sherry, Elder Kerry and Brother Larry don't like the new direction "that the Johnny come lately" choir director is trying to take the choir. They refuse to sing that kind of music and begin to plot how to get rid of the new director.

When the community center down the street was condemned, Pastor Jones offered church resources and space in the church's new fellowship hall for the displaced Narcotics Anonymous group to meet. The Trustee Board disagrees with the Pastor's decision to help the group because those people are dangerous. Everyone knows they

steal to buy more drugs. It would be just a matter of time before they start robbing the members and stealing stuff from the church. The Board is prepared to file a law suit to enjoin Pastor Jones from proceeding with the plan. The congregation is divided on the issue. To show Pastor Jones they mean business, several Trustees and other members have stopped paying their tithes since all Pastor Jones wants to do is waste the church's money on drug addicts.

More scenarios could certainly be added to the above examples of conflicts between Christians in the church. Unfortunately, such conflict is not unique to the fictitious Hallelujah Baptist Church. Any two or more Christians, in any church, in any denomination are going to have differences of opinions. The point is, like other people, Christians fight and sometimes they even fight dirty. The issue is not that there is conflict but rather how Christians manage conflict when it arises. There must be a biblically-based process Christians can rely on, to maneuver and successfully guide them through the conflict in their life and church.

The writer became fixated on this concept as she trained and eventually became a certified Family Court and Superior Court mediator in the state of North Carolina. Different states may give them different names, for instance, in the state of Oklahoma, mediators are referred to as interveners. But, whatever they are called, the writer noticed the world appeared to have grasped some understanding that there had to be another way to settle disputes. As a Christian, the writer knew God calls Christians to be the head and not the tail. While a secular mediation program might be effective to assist those not in

Christ, the writer knew God calls her and other Christians to a higher standard. That is the motivation behind the project at hand.

This project suggests a reconciliation ministry model that seeks to empower Christians not to become yet another statistic of the devastation and diminished witness caused by Christians fighting one another, particularly in the Church. The aim of the project is to demystify conflict and change the perception of it from a destructive and divisive event to the productive impetus that takes Christians from contention to collaboration.

The hypothesis being tested in the project is: in a reconciliation ministry model where sermons are preached; biblical instruction on conflict resolution given; information on the dynamics of conflict shared; personal conflict style assessments administered; mediation skills taught and non judgmental conversations engaged in, there will be attitudinal changes in practicing Christians about conflict and biblical conflict resolution. While outside of the scope of this project due to time constraints, it is hoped when the people of God are equipped with such information; skill sets, and attitude adjustments, behavioral changes will follow. They will know how to be spiritually strengthened and know how to resolve their disputes among themselves in obedience to biblical instruction.

In Chapter One, snippets of the writer's spiritual journey is shared to help the reader understand what led the writer to undertake the project at hand. The chapter also includes pertinent background information about the history of the context, Beacon Light Missionary Baptist Church. Various demographics about the county and city of Durham

are provided. The history of secular mediation and general information on the North Carolina legal system are also provided to help the reader form a more complete appreciation of the need for the ministry project in society in general but especially in the Christian faith community.

Chapter Two is a review of literature related to Christian mediation. Various religious denominational models are explored to discover how Christians in different denominations manage conflicts in their congregations. As the context is an African American Baptist church, material is presented regarding mediation models in that setting.

In Chapter Three, the reader is given a historical glimpse into the evolution of the early Christian church and its biblical conflict resolution efforts. Research on the introduction of the Christian religion in Africa, the Baptist tradition in America and African American community is included in this chapter. Next, the biblical exegesis of selected Old Testament and New Testament passages regarding mediation provides scholarly commentary on the essence of the Scriptures. The final pages of Chapter Three contain the theological underpinning of the project. This discussion is initially approached from a systematic theology perspective and then briefly from a practical theology position.

Chapter Four details the scientific methodology the writer utilized to gather the empirical data and information regarding the ministry project. Initially, sermons were preached on related subjects to the Beacon Light congregation. A focus group was

formed. A specific curriculum regarding biblical mediation and mediation skills was taught and other research tools used to test the writer's hypothesis.

The field experience report and data interpretation is provided in Chapter Five. This chapter details the nuts and bolts of how and what the writer did during the ministry project. The extrapolated data is presented in narrative form and describes the project's results. The same information is replicated and presented in graphic format in the appendix.

Chapter Six is the final chapter. It contains a summary of the project. This chapter offers the writer's observations, reflections and conclusions pertaining to the project. Thoughts on project limitations are shared as well as what could have been done differently to improve the project. Such information is intended to assist others who desire to duplicate or expand upon this research.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The writer has had three names in life. Each name identifies a distinct persona transcended in a specific period in her life. Each period, with its players, events and encounters has individually and collectively shaped the writer's spiritual development.

Born the second of five children, the writer was given her maiden name and began her life's journey in a small city in New Jersey. The family belonged to the Shiloh Baptist Church. Established in 1908, Shiloh is a split from Mount Olive Baptist Church, the oldest African American Baptist church in the city. At age twelve, the writer was baptized at Shiloh.

The importance of education was stressed by the writer's parents. College followed immediately after high school. The writer was an Alpha Kappa Mu National Honor Society inductee and graduated magna cum laude from Morgan State University. Two years later, she earned a Master of Science degree from the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, Massachusetts.

On May 17, 1975, the writer married her first husband and acquired her second name. Three fantastic children were born to the marriage. It was five years, two children, one separation and reconciliation later before she realized what she had committed

herself to on that day. During the twenty year marriage, the couple separated and reconciled a few times. The final separation took place in 1992. In August of that same year, the writer and her three children moved to Durham, North Carolina where she started her legal studies. She graduated from the North Carolina Central University School of Law three years later. With the intention to give something back to the community she grew up in, the writer returned to her hometown; passed the New Jersey bar exam; and began to practice law.

In August 1996, the Lord called the writer by name and gave her instruction to, "Teach my people Jesus is Lord". She was conflicted and had many questions. What people? Teach them what? Teach them where? How could she teach what she didn't know? There was no doubt in her mind the voice she heard was God's. Nevertheless, the heavenly mandate didn't make sense to the logical, analytical mind of a lawyer. Why would God want her to do such an important job? Without any answers but with a sincere love and reverence for her God, the writer humbly surrendered her will to the Lord and declared she would do whatever God wanted. As is always the case, God prepares those called to service. From that point to the present time, the Lord continues to teach her Jesus is truly the Lord of her life.

The writer returned to Durham, North Carolina where she rejoined her old church and served in various ministries. She assumed her third name when she met and married her second husband in 2000. She thought he was the man of God with whom she would spend the rest of her life. He was a student at a nearby seminary. By all outward appearances, he was kind, thoughtful and most of all said he loved the Lord. However, a

more accurate description of him can be found in Gospel recording artist Daryl Coley's 1997 song entitled, "Removal of the Mask" on his Live in Oakland – Home Again album. The lyrics begin, "There was a man behind a mask, appearing to be whole. At the removal of the mask, another man had been exposed. Fragmented and broken, full of pain and agony he relished the thought of being free". While her husband always appeared to be in control to the outside world, glimpses of the violent, broken and sick man he was would escape from behind the mask after the door to the house was closed. The two and a half years the couple lived together was a conflictive time for the writer. She experienced physical, economic, mental and emotional abuse.

After their separation, the writer sought help for herself and her husband from the Church. But there she only encountered more conflict. She felt abused all over again because the more she insisted the Church should help, the more the Church refused to get involved in the dispute. Homeless, confused, embarrassed, broken and very angry, the writer realized she was in the fight of her life. A conflict of epic proportions raged within. Her mind told her to seek remedy in law. She needed to have him arrested, to expose him and to take revenge. At one point, she asked God to strike him down dead. This proclaimed saved, sanctified minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ had absolutely no interest in forgiving her husband. The writer knew what the Bible says about loving and praying for your enemy. She didn't care. She wanted him to pay for what he had done. He needed to be punished so he would not abuse another unsuspecting, innocent woman whose only and perhaps fatal error would be to love him.

Despite what her head wanted, deep in her heart she knew the only way she would survive would be to give it all to Jesus. In the midst of all the confusion, hurt and pain, if she didn't know anything else, she knew she needed to draw closer to God and the Creator would draw closer to her. In need of employment, the Lord blessed her with a job that reminded the writer that as bad as she thought her situation was, there was someone else out there in worse shape.

The writer started working for a nonprofit organization called People of Faith Against the Death Penalty. The organization's mission was the abolition of the death penalty in North Carolina. In her job she interacted with convicted murderers, the families of victims, the families of perpetrators, pastors, lawyers, citizens and legislators. The death penalty is a highly emotional charged and controversial issue. The experience exposed a spiritual dark side and stronghold in the writer's broken life. The Holy Spirit revealed that she was like a lot of the people she came in contact with on her job. Her thoughts like theirs were consumed with bitterness, resentfulness and unforgiveness toward someone who had done something to them. Like them, she was stuck in that painful place.

Her epiphany came while she was attending a convention. There she had the opportunity to meet an impressive and wise young woman. At first glance it was obvious the woman had suffered severe injuries about her head and neck. She had several scars and a large section of her forehead was indented. Her injuries were very noticeable. As the two conventioneers began to talk, they began to share personal information, especially the reason each one was attending a death penalty conference.

Though her name cannot be recalled, her story and her scars will remain with the writer for the rest of her life. The woman's scars are the result of what happened one morning when her father opened the door to his home to an unexpected and dangerous man. The man was high on drugs and alcohol. He had come to their house to beg for money. The woman's father refused to assist the man and an argument ensued. The woman was also home at the time and heard all the commotion. She went to join her father and find out what was happening. As she entered the room, she saw the man stabbing her father. When the man saw her, he tackled her to the floor and started stabbing her about the head. The force of the man's blows was so intense it fractured her skull in several places. Believing the woman and her father to be dead, the man proceeded to go through the house and steal items before he fled. It is only by the grace of God, the woman survived. Her father unfortunately succumbed to his injuries.

The miracle of the story doesn't end there. When the writer met this woman, she was actively fighting on behalf of her attacker and her father's murderer. She was protesting against the sentence of death the prosecutor sought. The prosecutor threatened the woman with contempt of court and jail if she testified in open court about her faith in God and her forgiveness of the man. In tears at this point, the writer asked the woman, "after what this person has done to you, to your father and your family, how can you forgive him? Every day when you look in the mirror and see your scars, don't you get angry about the horrible thing the man did to you"?

With a smile on her face, the woman explained, when God wakes her up for another day, she is so thankful. She doesn't see the scars; all she sees is God's mercy. She

went on to say Jesus forgave those who nailed him to the cross and crucified him. She was merely picking up her cross and trying to follow him. Not only did the woman's story minister to the writer's heart, but she also had the opportunity to minister to her attacker. She communicated with him to let him know she had forgiven him. She wanted him to know God loved him. No matter how bad the crime, if he would give his life to Christ, God would forgive him too.

As a result of that encounter with the woman at the death penalty conference, the bitterness and unforgiveness this writer had for her second husband began to melt away. The healing process began at that point. She realized that her case was not under the jurisdiction of any secular court. She realized like herself, her husband had to answer to a higher authority. She realized vengeance and punishment were not hers to dole out. The Holy Spirit led the writer to II Chronicles 7:14: "If my people which are called by my name shall humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and forgive their sin, and will heal their land."(KJV) The Word of God was clear. The writer had to repent for her behavior. She humbled herself, sought the Lord's face and she asked God for forgiveness of her sins. She had reached the point Lucius M. Dalton wrote about in his book entitled, *Doing What God Requires*. Dalton writes, "When we ask for forgiveness, the Lord will bless us. When we get rid of our anger, the Lord will answer our prayers. When we forgive one another, the Lord will lift us up and take us to higher heights."[1] The writer is a living witness to that truth.

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[1] Lucius M. Dalton, *Doing What God Requires* (Lithonia, GA: Orman Press, 2003), 82.

Today, the writer has returned to her maiden name, the name she was given at the beginning of her journey. She currently serves as a Magistrate Judge in the Fourteenth Judicial District of the General Court of Justice in the State of North Carolina. As such, she must extract the issue in a dispute, decipher the intricate and intimate factual details of a case and render a judicial ruling between the disputing parties. The work involves listening to dispute after dispute after dispute. It saddens the writer to see the things people do to each other. It saddens the writer to see families and relationships torn apart by silly conflicts. It especially saddens the writer when the parties profess to be Christians, but yet they refuse to even try to settle their dispute according to Scripture. Instead they run to the law and its courts for remedy.

Over twenty-eight years ago former Chief Justice Warren E. Burger of the United States Supreme Court reported in the 1982 Annual Report on the State of the Judiciary, "Remedies for personal wrongs that once were considered the responsibility of institutions other than the courts are now boldly asserted as legal entitlements. The courts have been expected to fill the void created by the decline of church, family and neighborhood unity."[2]

Justice Burger believed the fundamental failure of the church, family and community to maintain unity had cause a burden on the court system. He reiterated his position in 1984 when he wrote: "We must move away from total reliance on the adversary contest for resolving all disputes. For some disputes, trials will be the only

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[2] Glen G. Waddell and Judith M. Keegan, "Christian Conciliation: An Alternative to Ordinary Adr - Part One," *Cumberland Law Review* 29, no. (1999): 583.

means, but for many, trials by the adversary contest must go by the way of the ancient trial by battle and blood. Our system is too costly, too painful, too destructive, and too inefficient for a truly civilized people."[3]

Litigation has become a cultural phenomenon even among Christians. A large percentage of the cases filed in court each year are filed by Christians and involve a Christian suing another Christian. When Christians engage in the same cultural practices, according to H. Richard Niebuhr, "...loyalty to contemporary culture has so far qualified the loyalty to Christ that he has been abandoned in favor of an idol called by his name." [4]

Judge Burger's statements were prophetic in light of the escalating number of court cases filed each year. He understood there had to be an alternative other than court to resolve people's disputes. Justice Burger's statements should be viewed as spiritual admonitions to the Church. It is understandable and acceptable in today's society for non Christians to turn to law for resolution of disputes. However, Scripture is clear about how Christians should respond when in dispute with one another. Scripture specifically addresses the inappropriateness of Christians taking their disputes to secular court for a resolution.

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[3] Jacqueline R. Clare, ed. *Alternative Dispute Resolution in North Carolina: A New Civil Procedure* (Raleigh, NC: The North Carolina Bar Foundation and The North Carolina Dispute Resolution Commission, 2003), 3.

[4] H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 1951), 110.

After receiving her call to the ministry, the writer chose not to practice law. She did not enjoy playing in the adversarial, cut throat arena and the dirty tactics some attorneys use. It was not about you being on the winning side and the other side losing. As a practicing attorney, the writer was retained to represent clients in disputes. The American Bar Association's Model Code of Professional Responsibility and Model Rules of Professional Conduct require her and other attorneys to zealously represent clients and do whatever he or she can to achieve the client's objectives.[5] But, like Justice Burger, the writer realized there had to be a better way. No one really won when the parties squared off in a court of law.

Her attention turned to mediation work. It seemed to make more sense for the parties involved in a dispute to reason together and arrive at a solution to their problem rather than having a judge decide the outcome of a dispute. She became certified as both a Family Court Mediator and Superior Court Mediator with the North Carolina Dispute Resolution Commission. There was no greater satisfaction for the writer than to see disputants enter a room as staunch enemies and with the assistance of a skilled mediator, they leave with the issue mutually resolved and their relationship reconciled. After witnessing such success in the secular world, the writer wondered: What is the Church Triumphant doing in this area? This research project was birthed out of the quest for an answer to the question.

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[5] Joseph G. Allegretti, *The Lawyer's Calling : Christian Faith and Legal Practice* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), 8.

CONTEXT FOR MINISTRY

Durham County is one of North Carolina's one hundred counties. It is a two hundred ninety-nine square mile single city county.[6] The City of Durham is the county's only incorporated city. However, there are twenty- seven other towns and census designated places in Durham County. The most recent data, the 2008 population projections are that there are two hundred fifty-seven thousand, nine hundred and forty-seven people in Durham County of which two hundred eighteen thousand, one hundred and seventy-nine of them live in the City of Durham.[7] Based on population, Durham City is the fourth largest city in the state.

According to the Durham Chamber of Commerce, "Durham County enjoys a population and economic base that is diverse and growing. More than sixty-four identified nationalities are represented…" [8] Countywide, over forty- seven percent of the county's population is White; thirty- seven percent is Black/ African American; over eleven percent is Hispanic; over four percent is Asian while American Indian/ Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander comprise less than one percent each.[9] The population distribution by race and ethnicity in the city is similar especially among the three largest racial groups. Whites comprise slightly over forty-two percent of the City of

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[6] Durham Convention and Visitors Bureau, "Durham, North Carolina/About Durham/Overview, Facts & History/Durham Facts " http://www.durham-nc.com// (accessed August 4, 2009 2009).

[7] Ibid.

[8] Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce, "Durham and Durham County North Carolina" http://www.durhamchamber.org// (accessed August 4, 2009).

[9] Ibid.

Durham's population; Blacks/African Americans are very close to forty-two percent and Hispanics make up over twelve percent.[10]

Based on the 2006 American Community Survey by the United States Bureau of the Census, over one half of Durham County's population is thirty-four years old and younger. The same is true for the city of Durham as well. Over fifty-two percent of the city's population is thirty-four years of age and younger.[11]

In general, Durham has an educated population. In 2006, the Chamber of Commerce reported that in the age group of twenty five and older, eighty-five percent were high school graduates. Further, forty-one percent in that age group were also holders of Bachelor Degrees or higher. The median household income in the year 2004 was $44,048.00 and the mean household income in 2007 was $86,321.00.[12]

Religion

In Durham, between 1865 and 1880, outside the family, the main interest of Blacks and Whites alike was their church. Noted Durham historian, Jean Bradley Anderson writes this phenomenon was especially true in the African American community. The Church was an approved and tolerated place for social activities, a forum for expression on many issues and a plan for social living.[13] The Church gave

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[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Jean Bradley Anderson, *Durham County: A History of Durham, North Carolina* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 159.

shape, meaning and support to the lives of ex-slaves. The centrality of Black churches to the people's lives gave the earliest churches great importance and influence in the growth of the black community.

Durham's African American religious leaders have influenced the nation. Leaders such as Edian Markham, founder of St Joseph's African Methodist Episcopal Church, one of the first autonomous African American congregations in the country; Rev. Douglas, the civil rights pioneer who convinced Dr. Martin Luther King to adopt civil disobedience and Dr. Miles Mark Fisher, noted church historian of the Black church was the winner of the American Historical Association's Outstanding Historical Publication Award for his book, *Negro Slave Songs,* have all made significant contributions to the rich religious history of Durham, North Carolina.[14] In addition to being a prolific writer and university educator, Dr. Miles Mark Fisher, like his father was a Baptist pastor.

He was the thirteenth pastor of Durham's White Rock Baptist Church. Dr. Fisher was an advocate for the social gospel, building recreational facilities for the youth, establishing a cooking school, a Boys Scout troop and nursery school. He organized church members into districts and had them meet monthly to discuss their concerns.[15] The practice of meeting in districts continued under the leadership of the next pastor, Rev. Lorenzo Lynch. It was during one of those district meetings, a plan was conceived that would irrevocably split the White Rock membership and lead to the founding of this project's church context.

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[14] Durham Convention & Visitors Bureau, "African American Heritage Guide: Durham," (Durham: Durham Convention & Visitors Bureau, 2009), 3.

[15] Anderson, 370.

Beacon Light Missionary Baptist Church

The project's church context is the Beacon Light Missionary Baptist Church in Durham, North Carolina. The church is located in a declining middle class neighborhood in the southeastern section of the city. Beacon Light is a small, predominantly African American fellowship. The majority of the membership is over fifty years of age, middle class and educated. Approximately fifty to sixty people attend Sunday morning worship service and approximately thirty people regularly attend Sunday School classes each week.

Since its founding in 1993, Beacon Light Missionary Baptist Church has had two pastors. Rev. Dr. Clarence H. Burke is currently the Pastor and has faithfully served for over ten years. Under his anointed leadership several ministries have been instituted and community outreach projects initiated. During his tenure, Pastor Burke spearheaded and successfully completed a major building project where God's people can assemble, learn and serve the Lord. The writer is one of three associate ministers who assist Pastor Burke.

The founding members of Beacon Light Missionary Baptist Church are no strangers to church conflict. Conflict in the church altered their lives and worship experience in a way none of them could have imagined. A conversation with two of the founding members gave the writer insight into the controversy that caused the split from the White Rock Baptist Church. During a district meeting, some disgruntled members formed a coup to oust their long time Pastor from leadership.

The plan was to secretly add to the agenda of a church conference, a call for a vote to fire the Pastor. Reportedly, the members in favor of the firing made sure they had sufficient members present, even bringing in elderly members from nursing homes to assure success. The majority of the general church body did not have notice of what was to take place at the conference or participate in the vote. There was much arguing and fighting on that night and the days after that. The Pastor was out. Several families ended their membership at White Rock in protest.

The Beacon Light Missionary Baptist Church was organized by those former White Rock members. "The Committee of One Hundred" as they called themselves, organized, selected officers and began to meet in a nearby middle school. Shortly after its inception, the group asked Rev. [redacted] to be the first pastor of the newly established Beacon Light Missionary Baptist Church.

One founding member laments the relationship between the church and Rev. [redacted] did not last long. The relationship deteriorated and became estranged after the Pastor allegedly borrowed in excess of ten thousand dollars from the church to fix up his rental properties. After years of asking with no success, that the loan be repaid, the church offered the Pastor a severance package and voted to remove him in 1998. Beacon Light filed a law suit against its former pastor to recover the money.

The case was in the courts for at least two years. During the controversial time, Beacon Light Missionary Baptist Church had no pastor, but invited local ministers to preach each week. Church membership drastically dwindled from approximately one hundred to twenty–five to thirty–five people. The case was finally dismissed by the

church after Pastor Burke was installed in 2000. The church voted not to spend any additional funds to continue to pursue the matter.

Beacon Light provides a suitable pool of participants for this research project as most members are mature and have experienced devastating conflict not only in their personal lives but have also experienced it in a church setting. This collaboration with the Beacon Light Church family and Pastor Burke provides an excellent opportunity to gain valuable insight on the dynamics of church conflict and gather a wealth of knowledge that will assist them and other Christians to resolve conflict in a way that will glorify God.

North Carolina Legal System

North Carolina's court system is called the General Court of Justice. It is a unified state-wide and state operated system. The General Court of Justice consists of three divisions: the appellate court division, the superior court division and the district court division.[16]

The appellate division is made up of the North Carolina Supreme Court and the North Carolina Court of Appeals. The Supreme Court is the state's highest court. It is the state's final court of appeal. The Court of Appeals is the level of appeal under the

[16] North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts, "The North Carolina Judicial System 2008 Edition" http://www.nccourts.org/Citizens/Publications/Documents/Judicial System_021709p (accessed August 7, 2009).

Supreme Court. Judges sit in panels of three to hear appeals from the superior, district courts and some administrative agencies.[17]

The superior court division courts are unlike the appellate division courts that decide only questions of law. The superior court and district court divisions are the trial court divisions that hold trials to determine the facts of cases. Superior courts have jurisdiction over all felony criminal cases, cases involving more than ten thousand dollars, misdemeanors and infractions and appeals from the district court division. The state is divided into superior court districts.[18] Beacon Light's civil case was filed in a Superior Court because the alleged amount of money owed was in excess of ten thousand dollars.

The district court division, like the superior court division, is divided into district court districts. The district court also sits in the county seat of each county. District courts hear civil cases such as divorce, custody, child support and cases involving less than ten thousand dollars. District courts hear misdemeanor criminal cases and infractions such as speeding or motor vehicle violations, juvenile matters, as well as appeals from the magistrate court. Magistrate judges, like the writer, hold court in both civil and criminal matters as officers of the district court. In the civil context, magistrates generally preside over small claims court cases involving five thousand dollars or less. In some counties, at the pleasure of the Chief District Court Judge, magistrates preside over limited family court matters. The criminal magistrate's position is a pivotal one. The magistrate initially

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[17] North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts, *North Carolina Courts Annual Report - July 1, 2006 - June 30, 2007*. 6.

[18] Ibid., 8.

determines if there is probable cause to send a defendant through the doors of an often confusing, expensive, and sometimes all consuming criminal justice system.[19]

Statewide, during the time period between July 1, 2007 and June 30, 2008, the Administrative Office of the Courts statistics demonstrate that thousands of parties sought a fair hearing of their disputes in the North Carolina courts. There were twenty-seven thousand, two hundred and twenty-six civil superior court cases filed; two hundred thirty-eight thousand, one hundred and thirty-two civil district cases filed; one hundred forty-nine thousand, nine hundred and nineteen criminal cases filed; two hundred sixty-eight thousand, two hundred and fifty-six magistrate court cases filed.[20]

Roughly two percent of all statewide cases filed were filed in Durham, the fourteenth judicial district. Specifically, during the 2007 2008 time period, a little over two percent of the statewide civil superior court cases were filed in Durham; almost six percent of the statewide civil magistrate cases were filed in Durham; two and a half percent of the reported statewide civil district court filings were filed in Durham; and, approximately two percent of each of the criminal superior and district criminal statewide cases were also filed in Durham. Basically, all those criminal and civil cases were heard

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[19] Ibid., 10.

[20] North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts, "Cases Filed and Disposed July 1, 2007 - June 30, 2008 and Cases Pending on June 30, 2008" http://www.nccourts.org/Citizens/SRPPlanning/Documents/Srfy0708.pdf-WindowsIn. (accessed August 08, 2009).

by Durham County's four superior court judges, seven district court judges and seventeen magistrate judges.[21]

The administration of justice in the state of North Carolina comes with a hefty price tag. Under the state's constitution, the operating expenses of the Judicial Department are required to come from state funds. Judicial department expenditures in fiscal year 2006-2007 were four hundred and ten million, six hundred and sixty-one thousand, five hundred and eight dollars.[22]

North Carolina has been a pioneer in exploring and adopting effective alternatives to litigation.[23] Community mediation was birthed in North Carolina when three women from Chapel Hill became convinced some matters on the court's docket such as minor assaults, trespasses and other similar misdemeanors were really civil disputes between family members, neighbors and co-workers. They believed such disputes should be worked out without going to court. Thus, the Orange County Dispute Settlement Center mediated its first case in 1978 and became a model for new centers throughout the state.[24] One such center opened in Durham in 1982. Today community mediation services in Durham are provided by a non-profit organization called Women In Action, Inc. The writer volunteered for this organization and conducted community mediations in Durham.

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[21] Ibid.

[22] Courts, *North Carolina Courts Annual Report - July 1, 2006 - June 30, 2007.* 14.

[23] Clare, ed., xix.

[24] Ibid., 16-18.

Durham Superior courts order pre-trial mediated settlement conferences for civil cases filed in Superior Court. Family matters filed in District Court such as divorce and custody cases are mandated to go to mediation before the matter is scheduled for hearing in the Durham District Court.[25] The above numbers demonstrate, the volume of court cases has steadily increased as people, including the Rev. [redacted] and the Beacon Light Baptist Churches, seek remedy and resolution of their disputes in the courts.

Litigation comes at a hefty price. The cost of administration of such large volume of cases is probative. The world recognizes the benefits of using alternatives to litigation. Society and the legal community have adopted the concept of mediation as one such alternative. Some may contribute Justice Berger, the three ladies in Chapel Hill, North Carolina or others as the first to embrace the use of a mediator. However, the truth is there is nothing new under the sun. God sent the one and only qualified mediator, Jesus Christ, to reconcile enemies and end the enmity between sinful humankind and its Holy Creator.

It is the intent of this project to remind Christians, the Body of Christ, to seek the Mediator Jesus when he or she has a conflict with a brother or sister in Christ. Instead of running to an overburdened and unqualified legal system, hopefully Christians will have a different mindset as a result of this project. Hopefully, Christians will demonstrate to the world the best alternative, God's way of resolving disputes.

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[25] Courts, *North Carolina Courts Annual Report - July 1, 2006 - June 30, 2007*. 12.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY PROJECT

This chapter seeks to harvest the collected wisdom of some of the key thinkers and leaders in the area of congregational conflict resolution. Various literary material containing their thoughts, substantive observations and experience is presented here to provide a candid and comprehensive look of the subject. Next, organizations actively engaged in the work of church conflict resolution will be discussed. The final section of the chapter will explore particular denominational efforts or models for conflict resolution.

LITERATURE RELATED MINISTRY MODEL

In his essay entitled, "Theological Foundations for Resolving Church Conflict: Understanding Expectation and Perceptions," Dr. Kenneth Newberger writes that the Church is the one place people want to find respite from conflict. However, churches can be both a place of peace or conflict. The reason churches have trouble managing conflict is because it is so contrary to what people expect to find. Conflict is a reality of the human experience. Conflict is a natural outgrowth of the human proclivity to be self centered. It is unrealistic to avoid or deny conflict.[1]

[1] Kenneth C. Newberger, "Theological Foundations for Resolving Church Conflict: Understanding Expectations and Perceptions", Newberger and Associates, LLC

The Newberger essay suggests the first thing the Church must do to address the problem of conflict is to change people's minds about conflict. Once people open up their eyes to the reality conflict is a part of congregational life, they will be able to see what love must overcome to achieve love in the congregation. The Church also needs to establish a proactive conflict management process to protect the unity of the Church so members are not perplexed by conflict. When that happens, the Church will be prepared to address differences that arise in a manner that strengthens the social fabric of the fellowship instead of tearing it apart.[2]

In his work with churches in conflict, Roy W. Pneuman has identified nine predictable sources of conflict. The first major source of conflict arises from differences of values and beliefs among the congregants. When the people disagree about the mission or vision of the Church there will be disagreement about what the Church is and what it ought to be about. The second source of conflict Pneuman identifies in his work is a lack of structure, no clear guidelines on the roles and responsibilities of staff, laity or committees. The third source is similar to the preceding one. The role and performance of clergy can often be an area of contention in a congregation.

The increase or decrease in the size of a congregation can add a strain on the church leadership, congregational resources and be the fourth source of conflict. The leadership style or the way clergy relate to parishioners can be the fifth source of conflict in churches. The sixth source from which conflict will most likely follow is when a new

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http://www.resolvechurchconflict.com/theological_foundations_for_church_conflict_resolution_essay.htm (accessed 11/28/2010).

[2] Ibid.

pastor rushes to make changes before he or she gets to know the congregation. Poor communication is a seventh source of conflict in a troubled congregation. The eighth source of conflict can occur because some people believe conflict is evil and it should not happen in a church. As a result, churches often develop a terrible set of norms for handling conflict. Like Newberger, Pneuman believes conflict is inevitable even in the Church. It is part of every relationship. He writes, "Conflict creates the energy that makes change possible. Conflict becomes destructive only when we mismanage it."[3] The ninth source of conflict in congregations is when disaffected members hold back participation and pledges. The control of resources can become an issue especially when people feel ignored.[4]

Similar thoughts as Newberger and Pneuman are expressed by G. Lloyd Rediger in his book, *Clergy Killers: Guidance for Pastors and Congregations Under Attack.* Rediger writes, "As the Church tries to develop more effective methods and polity for handling conflict, it must define more carefully and develop methods for handling it that are proactive rather than reactive."[5] He defines three types of conflict in the Church: normal conflict, abnormal conflict and spiritual conflict. Normal conflict is inevitable and understandable wherever normally functioning people interact. There is diversity in the Church. A congregation is made up of people of different genders, ages, class, vocation,

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[3] David B. Lott, *Conflict Management in Congregations*, Harvesting the Learnings Series (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 2002), 51.

[4] Ibid.

[5] G. Lloyd Rediger, *Clergy Killers: Guidance for Pastors and Congregations under Attack* (Louisville, KY: Westminister John Knox Press, 1997), 54.

biases, priorities, experiences, perspectives and personalities. It is normal for there to be conflict among God's people.[6]

According to Rediger, abnormal church fights happen when at least one of the participants in the conflict suffers from a major mental or personality disorder. He writes some church conflicts occur when there are antisocial, borderline, paranoid, schizoid and narcissistic personalities or personalities chemically altered by drug abuse. Management and conflict resolution methods of abnormal conflicts must be designed to respond to such participants who cannot respond in normal ways.[7]

Spiritual conflict is the third type of conflict. Rediger is blunt in his definition of this type of conflict. He states the instigators of this type conflict have an intentionally unhealthy agenda; they resort to sinful tactics without remorse; and, have a persistent evil energy for their nefarious causes that seek to wear people down.[8] He advises any conflict resolution methods that do not take the existence of evil very seriously and acknowledge its reality will fail when applied to conflicts having evil agenda or components.[9] Finally, Rediger presents the solution to the Church faced with such spiritual conflicts. He directs the Church to follow Jesus' example of handling evil. Jesus' formula was to name the demon; cast out the demon, replace the demon with something spiritually positive.[10]

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[6] Ibid., 56.

[7] Ibid., 58.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid., 59.

[10] Ibid., 60.

Making Peace: A Guide to Overcoming Church Conflict, is a book by Jim Van Vperen. It states church conflict is never merely interpersonal. It always has theological roots. Author Vperen explains to make peace, the Church must embody the principles and practices of reconciliation made possible through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Church must learn to practice reconciliation as a way of life.[11] Character, like righteousness, is formed, not possessed. Spiritual character is God's work in us through God's Word. He continues, "If we gather in authentic community hungering and thirsting for righteousness, we have God's blessing and filling to grow through our differences."[12]

A book written by Hugh Halverstadt gives detailed guidance on how the Church should handle normal church conflicts. In *Managing Church Conflict,* Halverstadt begins with the question, Can church conflict be Christian? His response is the affirmative if a faith based process for differing parties is used. The process Christians use to deal with their conflicting differences must be an ethical process that is consistent with standards of Christian morality.[13] It is Halverstadt's view that the Christian vision of shalom is the appropriate goal for an ethical process of conflict management. Shalom incorporates reconciliation, redemption, justice, forgiveness, liberation, compassion, and kindness which are all values for a Christian standard of good and evil in a church conflict. God's peace, shalom, provides the ultimate Christian vision that makes a church fight

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[11] Jim Van Vperen, *Making Peace: A Guide to Overcoming Church Conflict* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2002), 22.

[12] Ibid., 25.

[13] Hugh F. Halverstadt, *Managing Church Conflict*, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 4.

Christian.[14] The following quotation from Halverstadt's book reinforces the most significant reason for the project at hand. He writes, "If we are able to be agents of God's reconciliation, non-Christian parties will want to know of the God who's Shalom we have sought. When Christian values are experienced in public processes, Christian beliefs may be believable."[15]

At the August 10, 2006 annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, researcher Hui-Tzu Chou presented an interesting paper regarding congregational conflict. The paper was entitled, "Identifying Congregations with a Higher Risk of Intra-Congregational Conflicts."[16] The Chou research analyzed church organizational structure, the characteristics of religious leaders, the characteristics of members, and theological positions to identify congregations at higher risk of intra-congregational conflict. Research data came from the 1998 National Congregations Study (NCS) of one thousand two-hundred and thirty-six congregations in the United States. The following hypotheses were tested:

- Intra-congregational conflicts are less likely within congregations less than three years old.
- Intra-congregational conflicts are more likely to emerge in congregations of one hundred to two hundred people.

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[14] Ibid., 5.

[15] Ibid., 198.

[16] Hui-Tzu Chou, "Identifying Congregations with a Higher Risk of Intra-Congregational Conflicts ", All Academic Inc. http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p100924_index.html (accessed 12/17/2010).

- Intra-congregational conflict is associated with the gender, age, tenure and educational level of the religious leader of the congregation.
- The probability of intra-congregational conflict decreases where there is social homogeneity of the congregation.
- Congregations participating in the charismatic movement are more likely to have intra-congregational conflict.
- The liberal theology of a congregation increases the probability of intra-congregational conflict.[17]

Well known leader, Speed B. Leas, is the author of several writings in the area of conflict management in congregations. In his essay entitled, "The Basics of Conflict Management in Congregations," Leas focuses his writing to senior wardens, church moderators, congregation presidents, and lay leaders who find their congregation in conflict. He provides practical insight that will give that audience a clear idea about the problem and what to do about it. In the essay, Leas discusses what conflict is; what people fight about in the Church; why people fight; what people do that is not helpful when they fight in the Church as well as what attitudes are helpful to manage the conflict in the Church.

According to Leas, the ultimate goal of the conflict management process is: "To move the congregation out of the chaos and confusion of enmity into reconciliation."[18] He acknowledges the ultimate goal may not always be obtainable so he offers five

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[17] Ibid.

[18] Lott, 33.

penultimate goals for the conflict management process. The first goal of conflict management is to make clear decisions about the congregation's difficulties. The second goal is to help the congregation understand people are different and that isn't necessarily a bad thing. The third goal is to make clear to the congregation that hurting and harmful behavior aimed at others is not helpful. The fourth goal is to reduce passive behavior such as quitting or withdrawing which is also not helpful. Such behavior does not allow the congregation or individuals to join in a collaborative effort to find a mutually acceptable solution to the conflict.[19] The last goal is similar to the previous one. This goal is to reduce covert, manipulative behavior. Like the other, this behavior implies secret commitments not to go along with the other group.[20]

In his book *Antagonists in the Church*, Kenneth Haugk addresses a specific type church conflict – antagonistic conflict. This type conflict is initiated by individuals who thrive on unhealthy conflict. These individuals have no desire to see conflict resolved. Haugk uses Speed Leas' five levels of conflict in congregations to explain how antagonists operate in the Church. Church members operating on level one do not perceive the conflict to be person oriented. There are no hidden agendas, just a problem that needs to be worked out. At level two individuals may feel a need for self-protection. Individuals operating at this level often turn to compromise as a way of dealing with differences. [21]

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[19] Ibid., 34.

[20] Ibid., 35.

[21] Kenneth C. Haugk, *Antagonists in the Church: How to Identify and Deal with Destructive Conflict* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), 32.

Those individuals who operate at levels three, four and five, Haugk calls them antagonists. Those at level three view conflict from a win/lose perspective not from the objective to solve a problem.[22] Level four individuals are not concerned with the Church. Their objective is to hurt their opponent or to get them out of the church or both. This individual is only concerned with being right and punishing those who are wrong. The objective of level five individuals is simply to destroy their opponent, irrespective of the cost to self or others.[23]

These higher level type people, Charles H. Cosgrove and Dennis D. Hatfield call troublemakers. These authors suggest churches will sometimes tolerate troublemakers not only to avoid conflict but may even perceive there is some benefit from the offending party and their unacceptable behavior.[24] Finally, Haugk points to scripture as instructive guidance on how the Church must deal with antagonists. He reminds the Church to follow the prescriptions in Matthew 18:15-17 and 21-22 as well as Titus 3:10-11.

Conflict is the number one growth industry for Christian congregations writes George Bullard. In his book, *Every Congregation Needs a Little Conflict* Bullard proposes a little conflict is good in small doses. The author's purpose in writing the book is to help congregational, denominational and parachurch leadership to empower congregations throughout the various intensities of conflict. By viewing and treating

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[22] Ibid., 33.

[23] Ibid., 34.

[24] Charles H. Cosgrove and Dennis D. Hatfield, *Church Conflict: The Hidden Systems Behind the Fights* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 96.

conflict in a positive healthy manner, the congregation can use the skills and habits it develops at the lower intensities of conflict to deal with high intensity issues.[25]

According to Bullard, there are seven intensities of conflict. These intensities range from low intensity, level one conflicts that are typical, normal and expected in congregations to level seven where dysfunctional persons seek to physically harm participants in a congregation or seek to destroy the congregational facility. In the book, Bullard devotes a chapter to conflict resolution, conflict mediation and conflict management, the processes he identifies for engaging conflict at the various intensities.

Conflict resolution is the process that works at lower level intensities. Here the specific issues of conflict are resolved and the participants in the conflict are determined to forgive, forget and move forward. Conflict mediation is the process that works better on mid level intensity conflicts.[26] Mediation is about agreements that help the congregation move forward in the midst of the conflict. It provides a plan and a way forward where all parties are involved, empowered and given new positive energy. Mediation seeks to establish a foundation for relationship with one another. Conflict management is the process that works best at the higher intensity conflicts. It involves controlling or directing the conflict from the outside because the participants are unable to do so.[27]

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[25] George W. Bullard, *Every Congregation Needs a Little Conflict* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2008), 3.

[26] Ibid., 123.

[27] Ibid., 124.

A similar paper to Chou's work was previously presented by Richard Pitt at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association in 2005. In his work entitled, "The Discourse of Conflict and Resolution: A Case Study of a Historic Church's Approach to Conflict" Pitt studied a ninety-nine year old African American church as it fought to overcome conflict. According to Pitt, the high level of emotionalism found in Black churches transcends the worship experience and finds its way into the day-to-day interactions among members and between laity and clergy. Further, he writes there is some evidence that indicates bickering, back-biting, and factional quarrels are most prevalent in congregations that stress intensely emotional types of religious experience.[28]

Consequently, Pitt concludes, the emotionalism characteristic of Black congregations is integral in both the escalation and resolution of the conflict. Playing on, and sometimes redirecting emotions was an effective method of creating cohesion and tempering aggression. Rarely did people directly confront the person they felt was at fault or whose behavior they wanted to change. Instead prayers, religious imagery and doctrine, and other face-saving mechanisms were used to shape and reduce tensions. In this way, a sense of social harmony is more easily restored. [29]

In his essay, "Managing Conflict in African American Congregations," Ernest W. Walker discusses the roles power, culture, and race play in managing conflict in African American connectional congregations. These connectional congregations are reflections

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[28] Richard Pitt, "The Discourse of Conflict and Resolution: A Case Study of a Historic Church's Approach to Conflict", All Academic Inc. http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p20092_index.html (accessed 12/16/2010).

[29] Ibid.

of the denominations to which they belong. African American connectional churches often feel a sense of low self esteem, powerlessness from the long term dependence on the White church's power structure that often results in intra-congregational conflict.[30]

Culture is important in African American churches explains Walker. A cultural norm in one community can be a source of confusion and catalyst for conflict in another. Leadership style, preaching style and style of worship can all be sources of conflict in connectional churches.

Although congregational conflict in connected churches may not be race based, the perception of racism, bigotry, or bias is just as significant as its actual presence. "Race is either a direct or indirect silent participant in a conflict in connectional congregational churches. Concerns related to the Church's mission, dwindling coffers, declining membership, and changing community demographics all tend to exacerbate hidden racial tensions."[31] Walker writes. He concludes and suggests church leadership of connectional churches be willing to commit financial and spiritual resources to local congregations dealing with issues of power, culture and race. It may require the use of outside help to resolve issues.[32]

As the title indicates, *Getting to Amen: 8 Strategies for Managing Conflict in the African American Church*, author, Lora Ellen McKinney shares strategies to help African American churches manage congregational conflict. She considers these strategies to be

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[30] Lott, 134.

[31] Ibid., 137.

[32] Ibid., 139.

an "Afri-Christian model" that offers general principles to be applied based on each individual arena of conflict. The first and most significant thing a congregation must do when it finds itself in the midst of conflict is pray. The righteous should pray for healing in God's house.[33]

The next strategy is preaching. Sermons are the platform most congregants get information in the African American Church. Preaching should be a tool for healing and not contribute to divisiveness in the Church. The third strategy involves parishioner awareness. A model that uses lay leaders and church officers as ambassadors of detailed and helpful communication will go a long way in healthy conflict resolution. Different perspectives on the Church's problems should be explored in the fourth strategy. Church members must find ways to move beyond what McKinney calls "frozen stances" in order to accomplish common goals.[34] Even though something has always been done a certain way doesn't mean the Church has to continue doing it that way.

In the next strategy, the congregation should come together to establish common goals and implement practical solutions to the issue. Such common goals and solutions are usually more easily adopted and implemented. The sixth strategy suggests policies designed by all parties should be created. Ministry programs can then be implemented based on those policies. The seventh strategy deals with pastoral management. When the pastor lives a conflict free lifestyle and a well organized conflict management model is in place, the Church will most likely follow the leadership. The final strategy looks to the

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[33] Lora Ellen McKinney, *Getting to Amen: 8 Strategies for Managing Conflict in the African American Church* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2005), 46.

[34] Ibid.

promises of the future and help churches maintain their conflict free structures. According to McKinney, by coordinating with other local, national and international church groups that share the same goals, the Afri-Christian diaspora is strengthened.[35]

CONGREGATIONAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION ORGANIZATIONS

Three organizations stand out in the writer's mind in the area of congregational conflict resolution. In the historical foundation section of Chapter Three, there is a brief discussion of the history and involvement of the Mennonite Church and its peacemaking efforts. The Mennonite Central Committee's (MCC) vision and purpose is to demonstrate God's love by working among people suffering from poverty, conflict, oppression and natural disaster. The MCC is a worldwide ministry of Anabaptist churches.[36]

The organization seeks to build strong communities in the United States. Through the integration of its Mennonite Conciliation Service and Office on Crime and Justice, the Office on Justice and Peacebuilding equips people to live in community and to respond redemptively to interpersonal and systemic conflict, harm and injustice within families, communities and congregations. The organization declares that it values the biblical concept of shalom modeled by Christ Jesus. They are committed to that value and intentionally seek to pursue peace, justice and reconciliation with one another and all God's creation.[37] That commitment dates back to the mid 1970s when the Mennonite

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[35] Ibid., 46-47.

[36] "Mennonite Central Committee", Mennonite Central Committee http://us.mcc.org (accessed 12/28/2010).

[37] Ibid.

Conciliation Service was established to provide mediation in both domestic and international contexts.[38]

The Alban Institute is at the forefront of knowledge and experience regarding congregational vitality and positive trends across denominational and faith traditions. The Alban Institute is a 501(c)(3) not for profit organization that transcends denominational and faith boundaries to bring leaders of faith together to share ideas and develop relationships. It was founded in 1974 to be a major resource for American congregations facing the challenges of a rapidly changing society. Its mission is to build up congregations and their leaders to be agents of grace and transformation to shape and heal the world.[39]

The organization believes congregations are the seedbed for spiritual formation and they fulfill the human need to worship God and practice faith together. They further believe congregations nurture people on their journey of faith, strengthen families, and deepen bonds that create community. Through its publishing, education, consulting, research, membership, online activities and ventures, The Alban Institute reaches deeply into the congregations of the United States and has published several essays, books and other materials to assist them with congregational conflict and its resolution.[40]

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[38] Eric Brahm, "Religion and Peace", The conflict Resolution Information Source http://crinfo.beyondintractability.org/essay/religion_and_peace/?nid=6726 (accessed 08/02/2010).

[39] "The Alban Institute", The Alban Institute http://www.alban.org (accessed 12/28/2010).

[40] Ibid.

Peacemaker Ministries was founded in 1982 by a group of pastors, lawyers and business people who wanted to encourage and assist Christians to respond to conflict biblically. Since its founding, Peacemaker Ministries has equipped and assisted Christians and their churches to accomplish that mission. The organization fulfills its mission around the world through four primary divisions.[41]

The Institute for Christian Conciliation is a division of Peacemaker Ministries. It works with people in conflict and helps them to obtain conflict coaching, mediation and arbitration services. The Institute also works with gifted peacemakers to provide them training and certification to equip them to use their spiritual gifts. The Distribution and Strategy division works with churches and Christian organizations and provides resources, training, consultant and risk management services. This division seeks to build a culture of peace where people are eager and able to resolve conflict and reconcile relationships in a way that reflects the love and power of Jesus. The Marketing and Communications division works with the Distribution and Strategy division. It seeks to create and support networks of peacemakers by providing tools that enable them to share best practices, apply and spread biblical peacemaking in their own communities. The final division is the International division. This division coordinates the work of Peacemaker Ministries in foreign countries. It provides materials and training to churches, parachurch organizations and individual Christians.[42]

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[41] "Peacemaker Ministries", Peacemaker Ministries http://www.peacemaker.net (accessed 11/01/2009).

[42] Ibid.

DENOMINATIONAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION PRACTICES

The Lutheran denomination created an international ministry called Ambassadors of Reconciliation to help Lutherans and their churches in carrying out their peacemaking responsibilities as Christ's ambassadors as dictated in 2 Corinthians 5:20. Ambassadors of Reconciliation is a non- profit, independent branch that provides services based on the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran confessions. In addition to providing licensed professionals to provide Gospel centered counseling to individuals and small groups, the organization also has certified Christian conciliators. The conciliators provide consulting, conflict coaching, mediation, arbitration and group reconciliation services. The organization's goal is to equip Christians for personal peacemaking and for church based reconciliation ministries through speaking, preaching, seminars, workshops, bible classes and practicums.[43]

Appendix I of *The Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America* provides guidance through the steps of biblical peacemaking required as a precondition to the use of the church judicial process in cases of personal offense. The *Book of Church Order* (BCO) stresses that Holy Scripture is God's procedure for reclaiming those who have gone astray. The preface to the appendix encourages each presbytery to have several elders trained in the area of Christian conciliation who would be able to serve as

[43] "Ambassadors of Reconciliation", Ambassadors of Reconciliation http://www.hisaor.org/ (accessed 11/01/2009).

conciliators in cases that should and could be resolved privately before the initiation of the judicial process.[44]

The *Book of Church Order* (BCO 27-5) details the biblical steps of discipline as they relate to peacemaking. The first step is instruction in the Word of God. The Bible outlines the process for resolving personal and substantive issues in a constructive manner. Paraphrasing 2 Corinthians 5:18, the Word reveals that God, the Creator reconciled us to the Creator through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. According to the BCO, one way we can encourage the world to reconciliation with God is to model reconciliation among people.[45]

In the second step, the offended party can decide to overlook the offense. When the offense is too serious to overlook, Scripture requires the offended party to first go to the offender to privately discuss the matter and perhaps negotiate a solution that meets the needs of all the involved parties. Often the execution of the first two steps will be enough to keep the unity of the spirit. However, if the private admonition is unsuccessful, the third step requires bringing in one or two witnesses to assist in the peacemaking process.[46]

The BCO requires the disputing parties to ask one or more other Christians to act as conciliators and help mediate a voluntary settlement. If that fails, the parties are to turn

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[44] *The Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America*, Sixth ed. (The Office of the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, 2007), Appendix I.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

to church discipline; bring in one or more to arbitrate the dispute and render a biblically based decision which both sides must accept. When the first three steps do not resolve a conflict, formal church discipline is the next step. This process is addressed in the Rules of Discipline found in Part II of the *Book of Church Order*. Sections D-1.000 through D-14.0502 of the Rules of Discipline embodies the principles of church discipline and describes the way in which the judicial process within the church is conducted. [47]

The United Methodist Church /General Counsel on Finance and Administration gave birth to JUSTPEACE in 1999. JUSTPEACE is a church-wide ministry designed to provide new ways to resolve conflicts experienced in various United Methodist denominational agencies, organizations and persons. The ministry "is a mission of the United Methodist Church to engage conflict constructively in ways that strive for justice, reconciliation, resource preservation and restoration of community in and through the United Methodist Church and with the Church universal."[48]

The United Methodist General Conference issued a call for peacemaking in 2008. The call is based on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and his teaching to love our enemies; pray for those who hurt us; and to forgive those who sin against us. Resolution 6091 is entitled "A Call for Peacemaking." It states that for the United Methodist Church, peacemaking is an essential task for achieving success in its other initiatives. It further asserts that peacemaking is a characteristic of vital congregations. The call urges local

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[47] Ibid., D-1.000-D-14.0502.

[48] Richard Fincher, "Implementing a Vision in Congregational Conflict Resolution", JUSTPEACE Center for Mediation and Conflict Transformation http://justpeaceumc.org/2009/11/implementing-a-vision-in-congregational-conflict-resolution (accessed 08/03/2010).

congregations among other things to teach and practice peacemaking and to become instruments of peace. [49]

In its pamphlet, *Engage Conflict Well,* JUSTPEACE outlines four things one can do to prepare for what it labels conflict transformation. An initial effort one can do is be open to conflict as an opportunity for growth and revelation. Secondly, one can open their heart and mind to God's reconciling love and being a reconciler. Thirdly, one must listen for understanding, be forgiving, and speak in love. Finally, one must strive to be a mediating presence in the conflict, accept forgiveness and healing.[50]

The pamphlet also shares five things one can do to engage others in conflict transformation. The first step suggests that people analyze the conflict and together design a collaborative process to solve the dispute that everyone can participate and be responsible for. Next, the parties should draw up a relational covenant that clearly delineates how everyone is to be treated in the process. The third step encourages the parties to remember and tell stories of the positive experiences or moments of grace between the parties. It also suggests the parties share dreams and hopes together. Such an exercise can reveal strong preferences, deep values and desires. Next the parties should attempt to move from their positions in the conflict to their interests and needs. They should seek to generate options to reach a consensus; heal the harm and create a new

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[49] "The Resolution: A Call for Peacemaking", JUSTPEACE Center for Mediation and Conflict Transformation http://justpeaceumc.org/peacemaking/a-call-for-peacemaking/ (accessed 08/03/2010).

[50] "Engage Conflict Well: A Guide to Prepare Yourself and Engage Others in Conflict Transformation," ed. United Methodist Church (JUSTPEACE Center for Mediation and Conflict Transformation]2006), 13.

relationship. Finally, the parties should be prayerful, persistent, patient and celebrate each step toward healing and communion.[51]

Larry McSwain and William Treadwell, Jr. are both affiliated with The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. They wrote a book entitled, *Conflict Ministry in the Church* to provide a practical guide and framework for dealing with conflict in the Church. In their preface, the authors share their thesis that conflict offers the Christian an opportunity to minister to others as a reconciling servant of Jesus Christ.[52] According to McSwain and Treadwell, "Conflict was not God's plan for humanity."[53] They clarify the statement and explain the peace (shalom) persons yearn was implanted in humans because we were created by God.

The authors' process of conflict ministry seeks to apply the Christian principles of forgiveness, love and reconciliation to conflict in a way that Christian growth results for those involved. The process involves a series of steps with reconciliation in Jesus Christ for all the parties to the conflict as the ultimate goal. The first step is spotting the potential for conflict. Conflict ministry should begin with an awareness of developing conflict. Those involved in conflict ministry should be observant and listen for developing conflict.[54]

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[51] Ibid.

[52] Larry L. McSwain and William C. Treadwell, *Conflict Ministry in the Church* (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press, 1981), preface.

[53] Ibid., 19.

[54] Ibid., 28.

The second step is avoiding conflict with integrity. Avoidance is a proactive form of conflict ministry. This step can be effective if attempted before conflict has developed into a public event.[55] Engage conflict events productively is the third step in conflict ministry. Proactive forms of engagement a conflict ministry can use are diffusion and problem solving analysis. After this is done, a workable solution by Christian partners can be achieved.[56]

The fourth step is to conclude conflict through responsible decision-making. The conflict manager must exercise authoritative control and sensitive leadership to guide conflicting parties as they work toward a healthy decision to the conflict.[57] The last step of conflict ministry is to celebrate the conclusion of conflict. No decision will perfectly satisfy everyone but when the best possible outcome is reached by the parties, the conflict has been concluded.[58] "Closure of conflict should be accomplished in the context of prayer and praise. The Church should celebrate the victory of concluded conflict."[59] The writer could not agree more

The General Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, formally called the General Association of the Colored Baptist of North Carolina was established in 1867. The organization was contacted to inquire if it had any formal written guidelines to assist

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[55] Ibid., 38.

[56] Ibid., 42.

[57] Ibid., 45.

[58] Ibid., 46.

[59] Ibid., 47.

member churches to resolve conflict. The writer was informed there were no written guidelines. The Executive Secretary does however facilitate mediations between disputing parties if asked and if a Church's by –laws have such a provision.

The Caucasian counterpart, the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina has the Conflict Resolution Network. This network is a ministry of Baptist State Convention of North Carolina set up to assist North Carolina Baptist Churches with conflict. Members, Dennis Burton and M. Wayne Oakes have written a manual entitled *Finding a Way Through Conflict.* The work professes to be "a unique, step by step approach to understanding the dynamics and reality of church conflict."[60] While offering the manual as a tool, Burton and Oakes also affirm the autonomy of the local congregation to determine procedures that work best for them.

The context church, Beacon Light Missionary Baptist Church, belongs to The New Hope Missionary Baptist Association. On December 30, 2010, the writer had a telephone conversation with the Moderator of the association, to determine if the association had written conflict resolution procedures or guidelines. The writer was told the association does not have any written procedures. However, the Association does mediate conflicts if invited to do so.

Five pastors are selected by the Moderator to sit on a special committee to mediate a dispute. The committee meets with the parties individually and together to flush out the issues. The committee strives to offer a non biased perspective and follows

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[60] Dennis L. Burton and M. Wayne Oakes, "Finding a Way through Conflict," ed. Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (Cary, NC: Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, 2007), 1.

the reconciliation process as outlined in Matthew 18. The committee helps the parties reach an amicable resolution. When asked if the Association should have written conflict procedures, the Moderator indicated he felt written procedures would be a restraint to the process and cause parties not to be open.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

God's magnanimous plan to reconcile a sinful people and bring them in right relationship is demonstrative of the Creator's deep love, forgiveness and desire for fellowship with mankind, God's creation. This fellowship, according to Karl Barth in *The Doctrine of Reconciliation: Church Dogmatics,* "originally existed between God and man, which was then disturbed and jeopardized, the purpose of which was then fulfilled in Jesus Christ and in the work of reconciliation."[1] God sent Jesus to bridge the chasm of sin that separated them. Jesus provides the only way sinful mankind, the enemy and active contradiction of God, can be reconciled to Holy God. As God so loved, likewise is the divine mandate to the children of God to love, forgive, and be reconciled with each other when conflict seeks to separate them. Thus, God gave Christians the ministry of reconciliation. In his article entitled, *The Three Major Characteristics of the Judeo-Christian Model of Peacemaking*, Kenneth Newberger says reconciliation is considered to be "the central concept of Christianity."[2]

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[1] Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, trans., G. W. Bromiley (New York, NY: Continuum Books, 2004), 24.

[2] Kenneth C. Newberger, "The Three Major Characteristics of the Judeo-Christian Model of Peacemaking", mediate.com http://www.mediate.com/pfriendly.cfm?id=5375 (accessed 11/03/2009).

Conflict is a fact of life in a fallen world that tests the boundaries of love. To love your brother or sister in Christ in the midst of conflict as Jesus does is evidently a tall order even for the Body of Christ. The following statistics from the Institute of Christian Conciliation demonstrate the apparent veracity of that statement.

- Born again Christians in the United States file four to eight million lawsuits every year. Many of those lawsuits involve Christians suing other Christians.
- There are nineteen thousand scarring church conflicts in the United States each year.
- There are one thousand, two hundred twenty- four Christian divorces per day in the United States. This is virtually the same amount as in the general population.
- In the United States, fifteen hundred pastors are forced to leave their assignments every month and the seven primary reasons for forced exits all involve some form of conflict.[3]

These figures paint a bleak and schizophrenic picture of the inadequacy of Christians to love one another and to victoriously maneuver together through the conflict in their lives. The statistics demonstrate there is a dichotomy between the Christian love walk and the Christian love talk. In *Strength to Love*, Dr. Martin Luther King wrote about Christians, "We talk eloquently about our commitment to the principles of Christianity, and yet our lives are saturated with the practices of paganism."[4] He laments further, "We live according to the philosophy that life is a matter of getting even and of saving face.

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[3] Ken Sande, "The High Cost of Conflict", Peacemaker Ministries http://www.peacemaker.net/site/c.nulWL7MOJtE/b.5369283/k.71DF/The_High_Cost_of_Conflict (accessed 11/01/2009 2009).

[4] Martin Luther King, *Strength to Love*, 1st Fortress Press ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 40.

We bow before the altar of revenge."[5] Despite Jesus' command to love one another and specific Biblical instruction on how Christians are to resolve disputes among themselves, the statistics are alarming.

This chapter will present the historical, biblical and theological foundation for the reconciliation model for conflict resolution. The historical discussion traces the Church's teachings and efforts to resolve conflict from the early church to the present. As part of this effort, the historical development of certain religious denominational conflict resolution models will be mentioned. As the context and focus of the project is an African American church, an abbreviated historical synopsis of the evolution of the African American Baptist church in general as well as the Beacon Light Missionary Baptist Church will also be presented in this section.

Next, selected Old Testament and New Testament scriptures will be presented as the biblical foundation of the reconciliation model. Specific focus is on the mediation model proposed by Jethro to help Moses resolve the peoples' many conflicts in the second book of Moses called Exodus 18:19-23 (KJV). The New Testament scripture selected is the first epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians 6:1-8 (KJV). This scripture addresses the appropriateness of Christians taking each other to secular courts to resolve their disputes.

As a side bar, the writer felt it might be interesting to search the scriptures to explore instances of conflict in the lives of Moses and Paul, the writers of the selected

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[5] Ibid., 41.

texts. The final section of this chapter will look at the work of Jesus, the mediator, from a theological perspective and as the foundation of this conflict resolution ministry project. The author also intends to look at Practical Theology and its application in the project.

HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

According to Nadja Alexander, conciliation and the peaceful resolution of disputes is an inherent philosophy of all major religions. Etched in both the pages of the Old and the New Testaments, mediation and conciliation are stalwart principles of the Christian faith.[6] Historically, religious institutions such as churches and synagogues have carried out much of the early work in mediation. Religious philosophies regarding conciliation and forgiveness birthed and shaped mediation systems to resolve internal disputes as well as claims against the church within the church itself.[7] However, Myron Augsburger contends the early church did not really have a well defined understanding of the doctrine of reconciliation. Further, Augsburger believes the theologians back then paid little attention to how Christians lived in a reconciled relationship with God or to reconciling relationships.[8]

The earliest known conflict in a Christian congregation and the method used to resolve it is found in the Book of Acts 6:1-7.[9] The conflict was between two Jewish

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[6] Nadja Marie Alexander, *Global Trends in Mediation* (Frederick, MD: Aspen Publishers, Inc., 2006), 415.

[7] Ibid., 416.

[8] Myron Augsburger, *The Robe of God: Reconciliation, the Believers Church Essential* (Herald Press, 2000), 22.

[9] Carolyn Schrock-Shenk and Lawrence Ressler, *Making Peace with Conflict : Practical Skills for Conflict Transformation* (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1999), 168.

groups. The Hebrew or Aramaic speaking group kept the customs and language of their ancestors. The other group consisted of Greek speaking Jews. These Jews embraced Hellenistic influences.[10] The Church in Jerusalem was multi-cultural, socially diverse and new in the faith. Such a combination proved to be a fertile breeding ground for conflict to flourish.

The particular dispute as reported in the text stemmed from allegations of discrimination by the majority Aramaic speaking group. The charge was that the Greek speaking widows were being neglected in the Church's daily distribution of charitable food. According to commentary in the Life Application Study Bible, any favoritism by the Hebrew speaking Christians was probably not racially motivated but rather was due more to the language barrier between the two groups.[11] Nevertheless, this internal congregational conflict had the potential to negatively impact the Church.

As an attorney, the writer need not stretch the imagination to think how such a case today would quickly escalate into a class action civil suit. In commencing their action, the Plaintiffs, the Greek speaking widows, would probably have alleged discrimination in their pleadings. The Defendants, the Aramaic group, would of course deny the allegations as set forth in the complaint. Then, the tedious, costly and lengthy legal process would begin. The pretrial hearings, motions, depositions, interrogatories, trials and possible appeals would consume all the church members' time and resources.

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[10] Justo L. González, *The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation*, 1st ed., The Story of Christianity (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 18.

[11] The Holy Bible, *The Life Application Study Bible, New International Version* (Wheaton, IL Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. , 2004), 1814.

Acts 6: 2 details the process the twelve Apostles instituted instead to resolve the conflict between the estranged Church members. The Apostles gathered all the disciples together. They involved everyone to participate in the resolution of the issue. A template of a process whereby the Church was able to resolve its own difficulties was instituted.[12] According to Carl Dudley in *Studying Congregations,* to accumulate information and to deal with emotionally charged conflict, church leaders should gather congregants together for dialog and exchanges.[13]

This pattern of reconciliation of church disputes emerged in the early Church and is contained in the *Didache,* which is also known as the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles.* However, it was not written by the Apostles. In *The Story of Christianity*, Justo Gonzalez writes it was written by an unknown Christian at a place and time unknown. Here the *Didache* is described by Gonzalez as "a manual of discipline giving guidelines for Christian life and worship."[14] According to Paul Hanson, the *Didache* is fused with the teachings of Jesus and presented as regulation of church order and communal life. Its conciliatory tone sought to minimize the divisive efforts of enthusiast and to unify factions under the umbrella of the apostolic church.[15]

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[12] Larry Richards, *The Bible Reader's Companion* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1991), 714.

[13] Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Studying Congregations : A New Handbook* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 122.

[14] González, 67.

[15] Paul D. Hanson, *The People Called : The Growth of Community in the Bible* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 460.

The Didascalia Apostolorum was the set of rules bishops followed in trying to handle disputes between the Christian faithful.[16] In the third century, early church bishops acted in the capacity of judges, arbitrators and mediators. The bishop was not a judge in the traditional sense as someone appointed to apply Roman or any other system of law. The bishop's judgments were not enforceable by the state. Nor was the bishop an arbitrator appointed according to strict Roman law to make final decisions that determined the outcome of disputes between the brethren. Their role as mediator was that of reconciler not decision maker. The bishop's first task was to act as the go between the disputing parties. The goal was reconciling the relationship of the conflicting parties.[17]

Constantine became Emperor of the Roman Empire in 306 and ruled until 337.[18] After his sudden conversion to Christianity, this fourth century ruler made sweeping policy changes that have impacted the life of the church and were felt as late as the twentieth century.[19] One change Constantine initiated was to extend the bishops' jurisdiction. Constantine's edict allowed anyone wishing to appeal a civil suit to the Episcopal court for judgment based on Christian principles to do so. The bishops then had the personal authority to offer suggestions that would assist the disputing parities to reach a solution on their own.[20] Noted author James Behrens writes that Augustine, the

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[16] James Behrens, *Church Disputes Mediations* (Leominister Hereford HR6 0QF: Gracewing, 2003), 10.

[17] Ibid., 11.

[18] González, 112.

[19] Ibid., 124.

[20] Behrens, 11.

fourth century Bishop of Hippo believed, "his job was to make his disputants live in earthly harmony with each other, not just to resolve their disputes about gold, silver, farms and herds."[21] Augustine "saw that transformed relationships were more important than resolving disputes, but that one can lead to the other."[22]

During the early medieval period of 400 to 1100, great legal and political changes took place. The Western Roman Empire fell in the fifth century. There was also a tremendous increase in the power and authority of the Church.[23] Despite these changes, the quiet reconciling work of the bishops continued. "From the seventh to the twelfth centuries, procedural activity of the Church provided not so much a judicial decision as a reconciliation of the parties."[24]

Developments in the later medieval period, 1100 to 1450, influenced the development of mediation and its conciliatory manner of conflict resolution within the Church. The thirteenth century was the high point of medieval civilization. The power of the papacy had reached its apex. Europe was united under a spiritual head, the pope and a secular head, the emperor. The schism between the Eastern and Western branches of the Church appeared to have been resolved.[25] As the Church continued to evolve, the bishops were involved in administrative and political concerns. They no longer had time to

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[21] Ibid., 12.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid., 13

[25] González, 324.

preside over routine disputes between church members on a day to day basis. Church courts, which included the Papal Curia, diocesan consistory courts and archdeacon courts, were developed. Disputes were delegated to trained legal specialists to resolve.[26]

These Church courts adopted the Roman civil procedure method of litigation known as "cognitio" that allowed the questioning of witnesses instead of the adversarial approach used at trial in American jurisprudence. In that scenario, witnesses are examined by the proffering side and cross examined by the opposing side. Further, Behren suggests the inquisitional and investigative methods used by the judges in these early Church courts parallel the skills utilized by a mediator. Like a mediator, the Church judges asked questions that brought out the real issues in the dispute. They also suggested compromises which the parties often accepted. The jurisdictional divide between the Church courts and the common law courts was not clear. Entries in fifteenth century record books in England provide evidence that Church judges understood their role as mediators as well as judges.[27]

Legal historian Ralph Houlbrooke conducted research of the 1520 - 1570 court records in the dioceses of Norwich and found matrimonial, testamentary, tithe and defamation cases accounted for nine tenths of the Church court cases. Quoting Houlbrooke, Behrens writes, "It was the duty of the ecclesiastical judge to encourage the peaceful settlement of most types of disputes by compromise or arbitration."[28] Research

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[26] Behrens, 14.

[27] Ibid., 16.

[28] Ibid., 17.

by Richard Wunderli of the mediation efforts of the London Church courts in the 1500 is similar. He writes in his book, *London Church Courts and Society on the Eve of the Reformation*, "Not all suits in London Church courts were prosecuted to the bitter end. Canonists had long taught that the preferable ends of justice are peace and concord between litigants: this could be reached, they said, through outside arbitration and concord as well as through court trial."[29]

In the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the modern concept of state arose. This was a shift from the preceding period where many matters of a secular or mixed nature had been regulated and managed by the Church.[30] The shift came about because fifteenth century popes at various times made certain concessions to civil authorities. The secular governments increasingly sought to control all matters. Consequently, the State encroached on purely ecclesiastical affairs. This led to frequent collisions between Church and State.[31]

As the fifteenth century came to an end, it became clear the Church was in need of drastic reform. There was a decline of the papacy and it had become corrupt. It was an age of great turmoil in the Church. According to Gonzalez, "the resulting disagreements

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[29] Richard M. Wunderli, *London Church Courts and Society on the Eve of the Reforemation* (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1981), 42-43.

[30] Johann Peter Kirsh, ed. "The Reformation", *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol 12 (New York, NY: Robert Appleton Co., 1911) accessed July 21, 2010, http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12700b.htm

[31] Ibid.

and conflict marked the entire age that we now call the Reformation of the sixteenth century."[32]

There is no published research on the use of mediation in Church disputes from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries according to Behrens.[33] However, two short, rarely used chapters in the 1917 Code of Canon Law stood as official reminders of the Roman Catholic Church's desire that disputes be settled "in modes that were simpler and more reconciliatory than a contentious trial."[34] One of those chapters is on negotiated settlements. It calls for the judge to take the initiative, at any time before or during the trial, to urge the parties to work out an agreement. The other chapter addresses arbitration agreements.[35]

In 1983, the 1917 Code of Canon Law was revised following the Second Vatican Council. The revised Code encourages the use of mediation. It "urges all Christ's faithful, and especially bishops, are to strive earnestly, with due regard for justice, to ensure that lawsuits among the people of God are as far as possible avoided, and are settled promptly and without rancor." [36] This same posture applies in the Roman Catholic system of

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[32] Justo L. González, *The Reformation to the Present Day*, 1st ed., The Story of Christianity (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 10.

[33] Behrens, 19.

[34] Ibid., 23.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

administrative adjudication of everyday disputes in the Diocesan courts or at the parish level.[37]

Administrative acts which can include decisions, orders, policies and decrees issued by church leaders with executive rather than judicial or legislative authority cannot be challenged in Church courts.[38] However, the canons on administrative recourse designate the bishop as the key person to resolve any controversies in the diocese where arbitrary administrative discretion is alleged. As such, the bishop may be required by the Bishop's Conference to set up a diocesan conciliation service to deal with conflict resolution issues or the bishop may initiate such action.[39] The canons also require, "the parties to the dispute – the person who feels aggrieved by the administrative action and the person who took the action – and also the superior to whom recourse is made to seek a peaceful solution before using the administrative recourse procedures set out in the Code."[40]

As pointed out, the Canon law of the Roman Catholic Church supports the use of mediation. However, in the last thirty years or so, there has been very little resolve within the Roman Catholic Church to use mediation.[41] In the United States there appeared to be a similar propensity. In 1969, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in America

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[37] Ibid., 24.

[38] Ibid., 25.

[39] Ibid., 26.

[40] Ibid., 27.

[41] Behrens, 481.

adopted and recommended its members experiment and adopt conciliation and arbitration procedures, known as due process mediation, in their local jurisdictions.

Many dioceses did adopt some form of grievance procedure. However, by 1986, it was reported the level of satisfaction and success of these programs was modest. The reasons for the lack of success included: lack of public knowledge about the procedures; the local bishop's unwillingness to submit to the procedures; the procedures were too cumbersome and time consuming; and the lack of training of those administering the programs.[42] Quoting Kevin McKenna's, *The Ministry of Law in the Church Today,* Behrens writes: "In the United States diocesan mediation boards have been available since the early 1970s, but for a variety of reasons they seem to have been generally ineffective; in some dioceses they have never even been utilized."[43]

Despite such slow beginnings, Behrens reports the number of dioceses in the United States doing due process mediations increased. As of the writing of his book in 2003, Behrens reports seventy six of the one hundred eighty-five dioceses reported having experience with cases submitted for due process consideration. He concludes, where the due process mediation offices have been established, they have been somewhat effective in resolving administrative conflicts.[44]

Thus far the historical evolution of mediation and conciliation from the Christian perspective and specifically in the Roman Catholic tradition has been explored. After the

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[42] Ibid., 481-482.

[43] Ibid., 482.

[44] Ibid., 484.

Protestant Reformation, the Christian Church continued to evolve. A sixteenth century monk, professor of the Bible and preacher, named Martin Luther is credited with igniting the spark that resulted in the Reformation. Determined to call attention to a community who had strayed from the core teachings of the Scriptures, Luther publically made his objections known. His infamous protest document known as "The Ninety-five Theses" was posted on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg in 1517.[45]

In this document, Martin Luther not only attacked the Catholic Church's understanding of the sacrament of penance but also its practice of selling indulgences associated with that sacrament.[46] Luther's position understandably caused major controversy between him and the Roman Catholic Church. The Pope sent a series of representatives in an attempt to mediate the dispute with Martin Luther with no success. By 1520, the situation had worsened and Luther continued to challenge the fundamental assumptions of papal authority. [47] Ultimately, Luther was excommunicated. Thus, the emergent fundamental forms of the Reformation were Lutheranism, Zwinglianism, Calvinism, and Anglicanism.

With each of these branches, conflict arose in consequence of the diverse views of these groups. Even though negotiations, compromises and formulae of union, were sought, there was no lasting success that established unity in the Christian Church.[48]

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[45] Martin Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian*, trans., Mark D. Tranvik (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008), 20.

[46] Ibid., 21.

[47] Ibid., 22.

[48] Johann Peter Kirsh, ed. "The Reformation", *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol 12.

Besides the aforementioned chief branches, numerous other groups appeared that deviated from them in essential points and thus account for the countless divisions of Protestantism today. The Anabaptists which appeared shortly after Luther and Zwingli is one such group.

The Mennonites came out of the Anabaptist movement and originated in the northern section of The Netherlands. Another group, the Quakers, was founded by John George Fox of Drayton in Leicestershire.[49] The pacifist and peacemaking philosophies and practices of these two religious groups embody the scriptural basis and historical evolution of the use of mediation to resolve conflict according to Biblical mandate.

Former Frisian Catholic priest, Menno Simons, converted to Anabaptism in 1536. When certain Anabaptists attempted to create a peaceful community by force, Simons took a non violence stance and distanced himself from the Anabaptists.[50] His position became widely accepted throughout northwestern Europe and many came to be called Mennonites.[51] Mennonites, among other things, believe in the centrality and inspiration of the Holy Bible and Jesus Christ as the one God sent to bring reconciliation between God and a broken world. They believe peace building is the way of life they are called to reflect in their daily lives.[52] Like many other religious groups seeking freedom, the

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[49] Kirsh, ed. "The Reformation", *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol 12.

[50] Timothy Murithi, *The Ethics of Peace Building* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 103.

[51] "A Peace Church," *Third Way Cafe*. http://www.thirdway.com/peace/?Page=1799/A+Peace+Church (accessed 08/04/2010).

[52] Ken Gingerich, "Who Are the Mennonites?: Basic Beiefs," *Third Way Cafe*. http://www.thirdway.com/menno?Topic=23_Basic+Beliefs (accessed 08/03/2010).

Mennonites migrated to the United States. They settled in Germantown, Pennsylvania in the mid seventeenth century where they maintained their traditions.[53] Today, Mennonites have become increasingly recognized, even on an international level, as Christian leaders in the art of conflict resolution.[54]

Quakers, also known as the Religious Society of Friends, is a Christian denomination that emerged in the mid sixteen hundreds.[55] The Quaker Information Center reports, Quakers are committed to their beliefs: God calls everyone to ministry; there is essential worth in everyone; non violence is the only way to resolve conflict; and the power of love must be used to overcome oppression, discrimination and violence.[56] The Religious Society of Friends began in 1647 writes Timothy Murithi when its founder, George Fox, refused to take up arms against his brothers in the English civil war. "He in effect provided the embryonic core for the pacifist position that the Quakers subsequently adopted."[57]

In his article entitled, "Friends in Deed", Campbell Leggett writes the Quakers have been workers of peace and acting as mediators for over three hundred years.[58] In the United States, the tradition of Quaker peacemaking can be traced back to the efforts of

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[53] Murithi, 104.

[54] Gingerich.

[55] Quaker Information Center, "Quaker Information and Religious Beliefs." http://www.quakerinfo.org/ (accessed 08/03/2010).

[56] American Friends Service Committee, "About Afsc." http://afsc.org/about (accessed 08/03/2010).

[57] Murithi, 91.

[58] Campbell Leggett, "Friends in Deed," *For a Change*, 12/01/1996.

William Penn. He strived to facilitate a peace agreement with the Native Americans living near his Pennsylvania colony in the eighteenth century.[59] Armed with their steadfast spiritual tenacity and quiet unpretentious witness, the Quakers and Mennonites have successfully demonstrated throughout history that Jesus is Lord even over conflict. Their efforts have spearheaded modern day efforts to biblically resolve disputes in and out of the Church.

As the project context is an African American Baptist Church, at this juncture, it might be helpful to briefly explore the indoctrination of the Christian faith in African and African American culture as well as the evolution of that dynamic in the African American Baptist Church tradition. Taking its origin back to Africa, Leroy Fitts traces the roots of Christianity in Africa to the evangelic efforts of Barnabas and other apostolic missions which commenced shortly after the death of Jesus Christ. He writes, Christianity was brought to Africa by African Jewish converts to the sect of the Nazarene.[60] Fitts further explains, "… the Christian faith was firmly established in the hearts of many Africans before the turn of the first century."[61] However, the momentum practically came to a halt during the seventh and eighth centuries. Christianity became weak and was almost completely wiped out in North Africa except for in the small mountainous kingdom of Ethiopia.

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[59] Murithi, 91.

[60] Leroy Fitts, *The Lott Carey Legacy of African American Missions* (Baltimore: Gateway Press, 1994)., Introduction to the New Edition, x.

[61] Ibid., xi.

In his book entitled *A History of Black Baptists,* Fitts begins that journey with the European background of the Baptists' origin. He reports nineteenth century historians believe the sentiments of the Baptists were held by the primitive church. Early Christian groups such as the Piedmontese, Waldenses and the disciples of Gundulphus shared practices we know as Baptist doctrines today.[62] Fitts goes on to further explain, "… the Baptists of Holland, France, Switzerland and England were mainly descendants of the Waldenses," which go back to primitive Christianity.[63] And, "… the Anabaptist movement was the antecedent movement of the Baptists."[64]

Authors, C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya claim the first Baptists have their origin in England. Separatist Puritans established the first English Baptist church in 1612.[65] The emergence of the American Baptist movement was almost simultaneous with the establishment of the Baptist movement in England. Puritan Roger Williams is credited with establishing the first Baptist church in America in Providence, Rhode Island in 1639.[66]

There were scattered instances of Black Baptists memberships in White churches in Rhode Island and Boston, Massachusetts.[67] However, the American Revolution and the

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[62] Leroy Fitts, *A History of Black Baptists* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1985), 20.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid., 22.

[65] C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African-American Experience* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 22.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Fitts, 24.

issue of slavery caused many White Baptists in America to set aside the basic principles of the Baptist denomination. "The slavery controversy had become an explosive issue among Baptists in America."[68]

Long before the slavery issue, there were some Black Baptist leaders who saw the need for separate churches from Whites. The result was the evolution of plantation missions. The first known African Baptist churches in America were on the William Byrd plantation in Virginia and the Galphin plantation in South Carolina.[69] Leroy Fitts reports one North Carolina plantation owner, named Thomas Cowan granted his slave "privilege papers" to go to any of his four plantations to preach the Gospel and evangelize the Black slaves.[70] Quoting James M. Washington, Lincoln and Mamiya write, "The cultural origins of the Black Baptists are to be found in the South rather than the North… in the mid-1790s."[71] Independent Black Baptist congregations were being established during the time of the American colonies' declaration of independence. The number of Black Baptists is said to have been one hundred and fifty thousand by 1850 and nearly five hundred thousand by 1870 as independent churches proliferated with the demise of slavery.[72]

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[68] Ibid., 27.

[69] Lincoln and Mamiya, 23.

[70] Fitts, 31.

[71] Lincoln and Mamiya, 20.

[72] Ibid., 25.

The Consolidated American Baptist Missionary Convention was the first national effort at consolidating independent Black Baptist churches. This organization failed primarily due to inadequate financial support and internal class conflicts. Three new organizations were subsequently formed. The Baptist Foreign Mission Convention of the United States of America was formed in 1880. The American National Baptist Convention was organized in 1886. The third convention, the National Baptist Educational Convention of the USA was established in 1893. The three organizations merged in 1895 to become the National Baptist Convention, USA.[73] In 1897, some members of the merged convention withdrew and formed the Lott Carey Foreign Missionary Convention. Later, this group reconciled with the National Baptist Convention, USA. The National Baptist Convention, USA was a distinctively Black denomination that continued to be plagued by internal conflicts. Such conflicts caused the convention to experience schism twice more. The first split resulted in the formation of the National Baptist Convention of America, Inc. in 1915. The second split occurred in 1961 after which the Progressive National Baptist Convention was formed.[74]

The central issue in both the 1915 split in the National Baptist Convention, USA and the 1897 schism which resulted in the Lott Carey Convention was publishing concerns and rights according to C. Eric Lincoln and his coauthor Lawrence Mamiya.[75] A new schism around similar issues erupted in 1988 and the National Missionary Baptist

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[73] Lincoln and Mamiya, 28.

[74] Ibid., 29.

[75] Ibid., 33.

Convention of America was formed.[76] The evolution of the Progressive National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc. came about as the result of different concerns within the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc.

That conflict began in 1957 when ten pastors in the National Baptist convention, U.S.A., Inc. were expelled and challenged J. H. Jackson, the then president of the convention in federal court. The issue was Jackson's attempt at autocratic rule of the convention and his refusal to abide by a 1952 amendment that placed a four year limit on the tenure of the presidency. Jackson became president in 1953 and sought to remain president. Jackson won that legal challenge. He was again declared re-elected at the 1960 convention despite protest by the "Taylor team."

The "Taylor team" included Gardner C. Taylor, Martin Luther King, Sr., Martin Luther King, Jr., Ralph David Abernathy, Benjamin Mays and others.[77] The team not only opposed Jackson on the presidency tenure issue but also vehemently disagreed with Jackson's conservative but strong opposition to the convention's involvement in the civil rights movement. At the convention, opposition delegates elected Taylor as president but Jackson refused to acknowledge that election. Both Jackson and Taylor claimed victory and during the next year, each conducted business as convention president. At one point physical altercations took place at a session as the conflict between the two factions escalated. One Jackson supporter was mortally wounded. The matter again went to court. The ruling was again in Jackson's favor. The following year a court supervised election

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[76] Ibid., 36.

[77] Ibid.

was held and Jackson was victorious. The outcome was accepted by Taylor and his team and they called for unity. But before the end of the convention, Taylor, Martin Luther King, Sr. and Martin Luther King, Jr. and others were removed from the offices they held and were striped of membership on the board of directors.[78]

It was never the intention of Gardner Taylor to lead the "Taylor team" towards organizing another convention Gerald Lamont Thomas writes. "It seemed to be the only avenue remaining for others who sought a fair and legitimate voice in the convention, especially on the issue of civil rights."[79] The household of Black Baptists had no platform to advance its causes for freedom, equality, and justice and so the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc. was formed on November 14, 1961 in Cincinnati, Ohio. Dr. Taylor became its second president and served in that capacity from 1966 to 1969.[80]

The project context, the Beacon Light Missionary Baptist Church of Durham, North Carolina was founded in 1993. It was a split from the infamous White Rock Baptist Church also in Durham, North Carolina. Founded in 1866, the White Rock Baptist Church was considered to be one of the wealthiest and prestigious African American Baptist churches in the South. For many years, White Rock was under the leadership of noted writer and Black church historian, Dr. Miles Mark Fisher. He served as the thirteenth pastor from 1933 until 1964. The church grew to a membership of fifteen

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[78] Ibid., 37.

[79] Gerald Lamont Thomas, *African American Preaching : The Contribution of Dr. Gardner C. Taylor*, Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Studies in Religion, Culture, and Social Development, (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 101.

[80] Ibid.

hundred by 1968. In a Durham Sun newspaper article, Dr. Fisher was quoted as saying, "… an average of four fifths of the total membership attends church services every Sunday."[81] The majority of Beacon Light's founding members attended and served under Dr. Fisher until he retired in 1964.

Dr. Lorenzo Lynch succeeded Dr. Fisher and became the fourteenth pastor of White Rock Baptist Church on June 25, 1965. A Beacon Light founding member reports conflict between some of the White Rock membership and Dr. Lynch culminated in an illegal vote that ousted Dr. Lynch as pastor. In disagreement over how the White Rock members removed Dr. Lynch, the Beacon Light founding members terminated their longstanding memberships and left their beloved church in protest. On December 8, 1994, Beacon Light Missionary Baptist Church filed its Articles of Incorporation as a nonprofit organization with the North Carolina Secretary of State.[82] From its inception and throughout its seventeen year history, Beacon Light Missionary Baptist Church has experienced conflict. However, as Dr. Samuel D. Proctor said, "We are in a position to make a positive leap forward if we have the faith and vision to make the right choices."[83] This is the substance of things hoped for with this project. It is hopeful it will provide information and skill sets to assist Beacon Light and the Body of Christ to be victorious over conflict.

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[81] Wyatt T. Dixon, "How Times Do Change: One of Nation's Top 10," *The Durham Sun*, Friday, March 1, 1968 1968.

[82] Corporations Division, in the Elaine F. Marshall, North Carolina Secretary of State, http://www.secretaryofstate.nc.us/corporations/filings.aspx.PItemId.=4896806 (accessed 09/18/2010).

[83] Samuel D. Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped For : A Memoir of African-American Faith* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1999), 201.

BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

Old Testament

There are examples in Scripture of the use of mediations to resolve conflict. One such example is found in the second chapter of Exodus where Moses sought to reconcile two fellow Hebrew men who were fighting. Another example is where Joab acted in the capacity of a mediator in the family dispute between King David and his son Absalom. In the New Testament, one particular Christian was asked to mediate and help Euodia and Syntyche resolve their dispute.[84]

The concept of mediations and persons acting in the capacity of mediator is diffused throughout the Bible. Mediation is consistent with Scripture. The word itself describes the work of Christ and is one of the most important doctrines in Scripture.[85] As previously mentioned, the writer will examine the Old Testament passage of Exodus 18:19-23 as the Biblical cornerstone and root of a mediation ministry model to help modern day Christians resolve their disputes among themselves.

Chapter eighteen of Exodus is a transitional chapter and the bridge between the Exodus story and the Sinai event. It is an epilogue to chapters one through seventeen and

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[84] Behrens, 7.

[85] Ibid., 9.

a prologue to chapters nineteen through forty.[86] Commentators note there is a problem with the chronological order of the chapter within the Exodus narrative.[87]

According to G. Henton Davies in the *Torch Bible Commentaries*, the first twelve verses of Chapter eighteen, probably took place in the Rephidim wilderness as verse five of that chapter sets the location at the mountain of God.[88] In these initial verses, Jethro is introduced. He is priest of Midian, and Moses' father-in-law. Jethro has come to bring his daughter Zipporah, Moses' wife and her two sons, back to Moses. Upon Jethro's arrival, Moses enthusiastically witnesses to Jethro about all Yahweh had done in delivering the Israelites from the Egyptians. Jethro responds by giving witness to the greatness of the God of Israel in praise, confession and sacrifice.[89]

The second theme of chapter eighteen is recorded in verses thirteen through twenty-seven. This text provides some of the oldest references to the formation of Israel's legal traditions. The system described therein was designed to promote justice within the community. In his book *The God of Freedom and Life: A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, Stephen J. Binz writes, "Israel's legal system with the covenant to be established at Sinai and makes clear that Yahweh is the source and authority of both the law of Israel

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[86] Carol L. Meyers, *Exodus*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 136.

[87] Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus; a Critical, Theological Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia,: Westminster Press, 1974), 321.

[88] G. Henton Davies, *Exodus*, ed. John Marsh and Alan Richardson (London: SCM Press LTD, 1967), 147.

[89] Childs, 329.

and its interpretation in the course of Israel's daily life."[90] Continuing, Binz writes, "All of the decisions and regulations that bind Israel as God's people were understood to be related to the covenant which God established with Israel. The covenant was made applicable to the countless problems that inevitably arise in daily existence."[91]

The day after his arrival, in verse thirteen, Jethro observed Moses acting in his official capacity. As the sole magistrate, Moses had the long and arduous duty of maintaining peace and friendship among his followers by resolving their disputes. The jurisdiction of Moses' court was vast. Moses probably adjudicated cases ranging from simple contract disputes, tort cases to real estate matters. Moses judged the people's disputes from morning to evening. The wheels of justice turned slowly as crowds of people waited all day to have their cases heard. This daily ritual practice, according to Lester Meyer, had apparently become an established procedure.[92] Jethro immediately concluded Moses was overburdened and his method of conflict resolution to be ineffective.

The writer can relate to Moses' monumental task. To serve in a magisterial position, imposes a tremendous responsibility. A magistrate judge must make life altering decisions that impact the lives of those brought before her or him. The rulings of probable cause open the door that thrusts a criminal defendant into a costly, confusing, unfair, and

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[90] Stephen J. Binz, *The God of Freedom and Life : A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1993), 73.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Lester Meyer, *The Message of Exodus : A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1983), 109.

all consuming legal system. When conducting trials in the civil court arena, the burden is no lighter. In landlord tenant cases of summary ejectment, the magistrate according to the letter of the law must order tenants out their homes even in the dead of winter.

Returning to the text, Jethro posed a couple of questions to Moses in verse fourteen, "What is this thing thou doest to the people" and "Why sittest thou thyself alone," The questions were not asked, Brevard S. Childs writes, because Jethro sought information or did not realize what Moses was doing. Rather, the questions were asked to solicit Moses' explanation of his role.[93] In this informal accusation, Jethro is accusing Moses of inept administration of juridical procedures.[94] It is important to recognize Jethro is not accusing Moses of misappropriation of power notes George W. Coats. Nor does he introduce Moses to legal responsibility. The text presupposes that Moses carries a legitimate juridical position.[95]

Moses' response in verse fifteen to Jethro's initial question implied the people had no one else to turn to for direction. In the people's mind, he was the only one so identified with God's presence. Addressing Moses' situation in the book, *Exodus*, H. L. Ellison suggests, "Moses allowed himself to be regarded as omnicompetent and responsible for all the problems that might arise among the people."[96] Moses explained

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[93] Childs, 331.

[94] George W. Coats, *Exodus 1-18*, The Forms of the Old Testament Literature V. 2a (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1999), 146.

[95] Ibid., 147.

[96] H. L. Ellison, *Exodus*, Daily Study Bible--Old Testament (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982), 97.

his decision-making process in verse sixteen. When the people came to him with their disputes, he inquired of God for a decision on a case by case basis. He would then inform the parties how God would have them settle the dispute.[97]

In his book, *A Guide to the Book of Exodus,* John H. Dobson writes, "... the word translated 'decisions' is in Hebrew *toroth* (laws). This word in the Old Testament usually refers to written laws giving particular directions about what must be done."[98] Expanding on that explanation in the New Century Bible *Commentary on Exodus* J. Philip Hyatt writes the decisions were "... often secured through a divine oracle on a specific question presented to the judge. The giving of *torah or torot* was frequently considered the prerogative of the priests."[99] In addition to the *torah,* Moses also referenced prescribed and known decrees, cultic and ethical directions to settle disputes in the form of *ad hoc* pronouncements.[100]

After giving Moses a fatherly reprimand about the error of his ways in verses seventeen and eighteen, Jethro gives Moses wise counsel about judicial administration. However, Jethro prefaces his advice with the declaration that if Moses listened, God would be with him. In making reference to God, Peter Enns believes Jethro was adding "punch" to his advice. He writes in the New International Version (NIV) Application Commentary on *Exodus,* what Jethro was really saying was, "if you do this and God so

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[97] J. Gerald Janzen, *Exodus*, 1st ed., Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 130.

[98] John H. Dobson, *A Guide to the Book of Exodus* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1978), 98.

[99] J. Philip Hyatt, *Commentary on Exodus*, New Century Bible (London,: Oliphants, 1971), 193.

[100] Davies, 149.

commands, you will be able to stand the strain."[i] Moses would be following God's order as given through Jethro.[101]

The advice Jethro gives is certainly a much needed solution to a problematic situation. The advice is fairly detailed and suggests Jethro, as a Midian Priest, may have had some experience with such matters.[102] For Jethro to give Moses advice was an extraordinary event. Elaborating on that thought, Carol Meyers writes, "It depicts a non-Israelite priest, from a people who were enemies of the Israelites for much of the biblical period, as the one who established something as fundamental for community life as an efficient way to achieve social stability."[103]

At this juncture, discussion will focus on Jethro's proposed system as outlined in verses nineteen through twenty-two. Jethro begins this passage by instructing Moses to stand before God for the people so that he, Moses, can bring their issues before God. "The counsel which Jethro gave Moses is first an affirmation of Moses' role as intermediary between God and the people. Moses is to bring the concerns and problems of Israel before God in order to discern the will of God in their daily life explains Stephen Binz."[104] In verse twenty, Jethro reminds Moses that he was also to be Israel's teacher, "bringing to them an understanding of God's law and clarifying God's expectations."[105]

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[101] Peter Enns, *Exodus*, The Niv Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 372.

[102] Ibid., 371.

[103] Meyers, 137.

[104] Binz, 73.

[105] Ibid.

In the next verse, Jethro gives practical advice about delegation of authority. He instructs Moses to institute a system that spreads the magistry among a broad swath of the population. He was to seek out individuals with specific qualifications. They were to be trustworthy; have a fear or reverence for God; and hate dishonest gain. The premise behind the qualification requirements J. Gerald Janzen explains is, "If each judge is a God-fearer, no judge is closer to or further from the seat of ultimate justice than anyone else. Every judge who is truly God –fearing is a God-given bulwark against the corruption of the system."[106] Also referring to the qualifications in verse twenty-one, Carol Meyers writes that it "… reveals the ideal that implementation of justice rests on the shoulders of those with impeccable moral and spiritual credentials. The word judging means being an arbiter of disputes and restorer of community peace more than conducting trials."[107]

Moses was to appoint these people to various spheres and levels of judicial responsibility. They were to be given jurisdiction over groups of thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. In his book, *The Road to Redemption: Lessons from Exodus on Leadership and Community*, Burton Visotzky estimates, "… working from the six hundred thousand figure so often associated with the Exodus, the second-century commentary on this passage reckons Moses is charged with seventy-eight thousand, six

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[106] Janzen, 131.

[107] Meyers, 139.

hundred judicial appointments."[108] This would be that no less than every seventh person would have the special responsibility to be a leader.[109]

The system of jurisprudence proposed by Jethro was suitable to military administration but not for judicial organization suggests J. Philip Hyatt.[110] George Coats agrees but says, "The new order is related in some manner to the organization of the military, but the military structure is not simply imposed on the process of justice. Rather, the text reflects a distinct juridical order, subsumed into military organization as leaders in the citizenry assumed a juridical role."[111] While there may be military implications, Burton Visotzky points out, "What Jethro is suggesting is a judiciary that is militant in its pursuit of justice."[112]

Delegation of authority was the heart of Jethro's practical advice. Moses was to decide the important and more complicated cases that may have required consultation of the divine oracle. The newly appointed judges were to decide the small ordinary disputes for which there was precedent.[113] This division of labor here concludes Brevard Childs is slightly different than that in Deut.1: 9 in that it relates to the difficulty of the case.[114]

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[108] Burton L. Visotzky, *The Road to Redemption : Lessons from Exodus on Leadership and Community*, 1st ed. (New York: Crown Publishers, 1998), 196.

[109] Göran Larsson, *Bound for Freedom : The Book of Exodus in Jewish and Christian Traditions* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999), 125.

[110] Hyatt, 194.

[111] Coats, 147.

[112] Visotzky, 198.

[113] Hyatt, 194.

[114] Childs, 331

This arrangement Binz adds, "may reflect a later period in Israel's history in which matters for which there was some precedence were handled locally while unique problems which would require a new application of covenant principles would be brought to court in Jerusalem."[115]

The administrative structure as proposed by Jethro put in place on the one hand a precise delineation of Moses' position, and on the other hand a tight organization of the Israelites. It allowed Moses to concentrate on the task of being a mediator for the people before God and a lawgiver.[116] It allowed a way for the people to obtain swift resolutions to their disputes. It allowed trustworthy and committed individuals to be used of God in service to their fellowman.

Clearly Moses had been established as the Old Testament mediator for and between God's people. It now may be interesting to gain some insight as to whether Moses practiced what he preached when it came to conflict in his life. As with all of us, Moses was not immune to conflict in his personal life. In the second chapter of Exodus, Moses fought and killed an Egyptian. Chapters five through twelve in the book of Exodus give an account of Moses' conflict with Pharaoh over God's emancipation proclamation of the Israelites. Challenging Moses' authority to lead God's people, Korah, Dathan and Abiram along with two hundred and fifty Israelite men rebelled against Moses in the fourth book of Moses called Numbers in the sixteenth chapter.

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[115] Binz, 73.

[116] C. Houtman, *Exodus*, 4 vols., Historical Commentary on the Old Testament (Kampen: Kok, 1993), 395.

Moses experienced family conflict with his brother Aaron and sister Miriam. In Numbers chapter twelve, the text describes how Miriam and Aaron confronted Moses about his Cushite wife. There is disagreement among commentators as to whether this wife was Zipporah, a Midianite, or another unnamed Ethiopian woman. While Moses' nuptials appear to be the point of contention of the argument, Aaron and Miriam's questions in verse two, "Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath he not spoken also by us?" is suggestive the real reason may be sibling rivalry. Another explanation is presented by Harold Kushner. He concludes Aaron and Miriam were really speaking out on behalf of their sister-in-law and against Moses' neglect of his wife. Regarding the questions in verse two, Kushner writes Miriam is saying, "… she and Aaron also periodically receive the word of God but that has not prevented them from maintaining a life of marital intimacy with their mates."[117]

Moses was a humble man who eventually learned to completely trust in God to fight all his battles. In this situation, he did not respond to the accusations against him. Instead, he let his all-knowing and all-hearing God handle the problem for him. God chastised and punished those like Pharaoh, Korah, Dathan, Abiram and even Miriam when they came up against Moses. In Miriam's case, Moses forgave his opponent and prayed for her healing. This is the attitude and response God requires and empowers us to do when faced with conflict in our lives.

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[117] Harold S. Kushner, *Overcoming Life's Disappointments* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 139.

Today, a similar structure such as the one proposed by Jethro could be instituted to mediate disputes between Christians in the local church. The pastor or ministry head could prayerfully appoint men and women with the requisite qualifications. These peacemakers would need to be trained in Biblical conflict resolution skills and procedures. They would then be able to serve in a powerful reconciliation ministry that assists fellow believers to transform conflicts into situations that glorify God. As with Moses, every great matter would be brought to the pastor or ministry head for mediation. The results would be as expressed in Exodus 18:23, "If thou shalt do this thing and God command thee so, then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall also go in their place of peace."

New Testament

The Old Testament scripture, Exodus 18:13-23, was examined for the biblical basis of how conflicts should be mediated among Christians. Attention now shifts to the New Testament scripture. First Corinthians 6: 1-8 was selected to further elaborate on not only the how but also the why Christians should resolve their disputes.

Literary critics have long suggested First Corinthians 6: 1-11 does not belong where it is located in Paul's first letter to the Corinthian Church. The placement of chapter five and six are of concern to them. Alan Mitchell, in his dissertation writes the literary critics felt, "… the letter would make more sense if one moved directly from First Corinthians 4:21-7:1."[118] Recent tendency by modern commentators is that in these

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[118] Alan Christopher Mitchell, "I Corinthians 6: 1-11: Group Boundaries and the Courts of Corinth" (Yale University, 1986), 24.

scriptures, Paul is addressing ungodly sexual behavior by the Corinthians. Although the usual view is that First Corinthians 6:1-8 has little to do with sexual morality or with the rest of chapters five and six, Peter Richardson in his article entitled, *Judgment in Sexual Matters in I Corinthians 6: 1-11*, concludes all of chapters five and six, including verses one through eleven have to do with sexual questions.[119] First Corinthian commentator William Beardslee disagrees, and notes there is an abrupt change in the subject of chapter six. The passage moves from the highly charged scenario of a ceremony of excommunication to the daily ordinary problems of disputes among the Corinthian Christian community that often led to lawsuits by them in the secular courts of Corinth.[120]

The subjects of what has gone on before chapter six and what comes after are nonetheless connected concludes Beardslee. The central theme of judging links the passages. The scriptures all deal with the responsibility of the Church to set boundaries for the Christian community that separate Christians from those outside the faith. He further believes there is a reason for putting the chapter on lawsuits between two issues of sexual misconduct. He says, part of the reason for putting the lawsuit discussion there was, "to make the point that the sort of aggressive efforts to get the better of the other believers was just as bad as the much more widely condemned sexual misbehavior."[121]

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[119] Peter Richardson, "Judgment in Sexual Matters in I Corinthians 6: 1-11," *Novum testamentum* 25 no 1, no. Ja 1983 (1983): 37.

[120] William A. Beardslee, *First Corinthians : A Commentary for Today* (St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 1994), 56.

[121] Ibid., 61.

First Corinthians 6:1-8, the New Testament scriptural nexus of this project, is an enlightening passage in that it details and maintains the group boundaries for the way Christians at Corinth settled their litigation with one another.[122] Such boundaries were needed because, as Michael Ashton writes, "… there was insufficient separation to the things of God, and too much involvement with the concerns of the world."[123] However, it should be noted the Apostle Paul in this passage was not teaching Christians should not have anything to do with secular courts or legal systems. According to Ward Powers, "Paul is not forbidding Christians to defend themselves if they face adversaries who take them to court especially if such adversaries are non-Christians."[124] Paul was not pressing for a system of church courts Powers also concludes. Rather, he was more concerned with the question of one Christian choosing to take another Christian to court.[125]

The Corinthians were proud, competitive and assertive people. They were seriously concerned with their rights and the concept of judgment according to David Prior.[126] He further explains it was Jewish custom to settle disputes within the Jewish community. There were also Greek and Roman social and religious groups who followed this Jewish practice. However, the Greeks were notorious for their love of going to law. In fact, the law and going to court was one of their chief forms of amusement and

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[122] Mitchell, Abstract.

[123] Michael Ashton, *The Challenge of Corinthians* (Trowbridge, England: The Cromwell Press, 2006), 64.

[124] Ward Powers, *First Corinthians: An Exegetical and Explanatory Commentary* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2008), 105.

[125] Ibid.

[126] David Prior, *The Message of 1 Corinthians : Life in the Local Church*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England ; Downers Grove, Ill., U.S.A.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1985), 105.

entertainment. Apparently the Greeks brought their litigious tendencies into the Christian church.[127] They had failed to embrace the truth that both rights and judgment had been transcended through the redemption which was theirs in Christ Jesus. "Rights have given way to reconciliation and mutual responsibility: passing judgment has been buried with Christ as one of the most destructive and loathsome characteristics of our unredeemed lower nature."[128]

In the first verse of Chapter six, Paul is admonishing the Corinthian congregation regarding the lawsuits. He was trying to get them to realize by initiating such lawsuits between themselves; they were washing their dirty laundry in public.[129] Paul is teaching that when believers find themselves at loggerheads with their brethren, they should work through their problems with, if necessary, the help of the Church. This should be done according to Naylor, because their difficulties are considered in-house tensions and not the business of unbelievers who because they do not know the Lord, will not be able to give effective counsel.[130] Out of shock and indignation, Paul asks the Corinthians, "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the Saints?" In Greek, the word, "dare" is emphatic because it is at the beginning of the verse. The verse is a rhetorical question and can be translated, "how dare you…?"[131]

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[127] Ibid., 106.

[128] Ibid., 107.

[129] Ibid., 108.

[130] Peter Naylor, *A Study Commentary on I Corinthians* (New York, NY: Evangelical Press USA, 2004), 137.

[131] Paul Ellingworth and Howard Hatton, *A Handbook on Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians*, Ubs Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1995), 123.

Paul's deliberate use of this challenging word "dare" shows how far away from the proper way of acting Paul claims these disputes are.[132]

The technical expression, "having a matter" in Paul's day meant being in a lawsuit.[133] Paul is explicit about Christians bringing lawsuits before the unjust. The Roman court system writes Maria Pascuzzi, "was known for its corruption and favoring of the well-to-do in its exploitation of the poor, in context "unjust" is probably to be taken less as a moral evaluation and more as a term to distinguish those outside from those inside the communion of the holy ones."[134] When Paul speaks of having a matter against another, the context is another Christian or another member of the Church.[135] Thus, his use of the term, saints, refers to God's people, the Church and not to the Israelites in the Old Testament according to Ellingworth and Hatton.[136] In his article, "*To Submit to the Judgment of the Saints.*", D.W.B. Robinson disagrees. He contends the name saints in the first verse do not refer to all believers. Instead, Robinson suggests it refers only to Jewish believers in their role as the holy remnant of Israel.[137]

Verses two and three of chapter six contain two of six instances in that chapter where the Apostle Paul asks the rhetorical question, "do you not know….?" Authors

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[132] Beardslee, 57.

[133] Naylor, 136.

[134] Maria Pascuzzi, *First and Second Corinthians*, The New Collegeville Bible Commentary. New Testament V. 7 (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2005), 41.

[135] Ellingworth and Hatton, 123.

[136] Ibid.

[137] Donald W. B. Robinson, "To Submit to the Judgment of the Saints," *Tyndale House Bulletin* 10 (1962): 1.

Ellingworth and Hatton believe these questions were designed to show emphasis and not elicit a response. They suggest the questions should be interpreted as strong positive statements that may also be read, "surely you know" or "I am certain that you are aware of the fact that" or even, "you have been taught that".[138] In these verses, Paul reminds the Corinthians of their future role as the saints of God in the coming and fulfillment of God's kingdom. In his book, David Prior writes Paul's teachings on these matters probably came from his interpretation of a passage in the book of Daniel that "Christians are raised to share with Christ in all the reality of His resurrection life."[139] That reality being the saints, God's people, will judge the world. The phrase 'will judge' here means "have the function of judging" the world.[140]

Paul continues to confront his readers in verse two and poses the question, if the world is to be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Ellingworth and Hatton write the Greek for 'are you unworthy?' can also be translated "not only 'unqualified to judge' but also 'not having the moral capacity for judging'"[141] Their thoughts are this rhetorical question could be made into the statement, "So then, if you are to judge the world, you are certainly qualified to judge small matters."[142] Speculating, author David Prior concludes Paul may have found the Corinthians'

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[138] Ellingworth and Hatton, 124.

[139] Prior, 109.

[140] Ellingworth and Hatton, 124.

[141] Ibid., 125.

[142] Ibid.

behavior of bringing trivial matters to court to be farcical if not blasphemous.[143] He wanted to impress upon them the squabbling about everyday matters of things pertaining to this life was ridiculous.[144]

To further put things in perspective, Paul next reminds the Church it will judge angels in verse three. Paul is referring to Gentile rulers as angels, says Michael Ashton. He explains when the saints judge the world; even Gentile rulers will come under their jurisdiction.[145] In disagreement, Prior writes it is the fallen angels whose pride originally had them cast out of the Kingdom of God that the saints will judge.[146] Paul hoped his reminder of the co-responsibility of Christ and Christians for judging both men and angels over matters of eternal significance would throw an entirely new light on the Corinthians' zest for their rights and for judging one another.[147]

Paul gives instruction to the Corinthians in verse four. He says, if then you have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. Prior's rendering of this verse is that Paul is telling the Christians, "If all this is to be so, in terms of the spiritual destinies of men and women for eternity, surely you can look after your own earthly affairs and settle any internal disputes without resorting to men over whom you yourselves will, one great day sit in judgment."[148] Adding to the

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[143] Prior, 110.

[144] Ibid.

[145] Ashton, 65.

[146] Prior, 110.

[147] Ibid.

[148] Ibid., 111.

shamefulness of the situation, according to Pascuzzi, it would have been bad enough had the Corinthians simply failed to perform its duty, but it had actually ceded its privilege to a secular system and its standards of judgment.[149] She further explains, this act of submission to that system indicated that the Corinthian community was still tied to the social conventions of the world and had yet to redirect its total allegiance to the community of faith.

Some commentators suggest the Christians at Corinth had appointed unworthy, ill equipped and the most obtuse members of the Church to decide their disputes so the people turned in despair to non Christian judges for relief.[150] Most modern translators agree with Ellingworth and Hatton that the least esteemed in the church is referring to non Christians.[151] Writer, Peter Naylor, concurs and further explains, such men could not be employed to settle disputes within the congregation "because unbelievers cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God, there is no chance that they will be able to apply wisdom and love to reconcile warring saints."[152]

With the intent to embarrass the Corinthians, Paul delivers the riveting question in verse five: "Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? No not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?" Paul's sense of indignation stemmed from the fact that the Corinthians were so proud of and always talking about their wisdom. Yet ironically

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[149] Pascuzzi, 42.

[150] Ellingworth and Hatton, 127.

[151] Ibid.

[152] Naylor, 140.

he says, apparently it was impossible for them to discover at least one Christian wise enough to decide between members of the Church. He believed that Christ lives in His Church and Christ is the very wisdom of God. The Church is enriched in Him with all speech and all knowledge.[153] Regarding this wisdom, Robinson writes, "the wisdom of God of which Paul speaks, is not a natural endowment of the Gentiles. That would be the wisdom of the world, which even unjust judges might well possess but God's wisdom has been revealed to those elect servants among Jews whom He has prepared, His Holy apostles and prophets that they might speak it among the Gentiles."[154]

Verses seven and eight are Paul's most pointed renunciations of litigation. In these passages, Paul lets them know they were living defeated lives, behaving like unconverted pagans and giving in to such basic temptations as resentment and covetousness.[155] He tells them, "Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren." These passages are translated by Ellingworth and Hatton: "Since you have disputes among yourselves that must be settled by a judge in court, this shows that you have failed completely. The fact that you try to settle your differences by going to court is good evidence that you are not living up to your Christian principles at all."[156]

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[153] Prior, 112.

[154] Robinson, 7.

[155] Prior, 112.

[156] Ellingworth and Hatton, 129.

Some members of the Corinthian Church were not only going outside the church for redress of grievances, but some were also going to get their hands on the assets of other believers according to Naylor.[157] Paul found this to be unacceptable because members of the church community should renounce their right to litigate to the detriment of their brethren and, instead should endure injustice and defrauding. This was the example of Christ who endured injustice without seeking redress. In fact this idea also carried great weight among philosophers who held that a truly wise person was above injury or insult.[158] Commenting on such practices, Pascuzzi put it this way: "not only have the Corinthians paraded their problems before the unjust, but in the very act of doing this they have become perpetrators of injustice and cheating against their own family."[159]

The Apostle Paul's godly wisdom in First Corinthians 6:1-8 regarding how and why the Saints of God should resolve conflict among themselves should be heeded. In light of Paul's advice to the Corinthians, what did Paul do when he found himself in the midst of conflict? The pre-Christian Paul, Saul, was certainly no stranger to conflict as it erupted virtually everywhere Saul went in his quest to persecute Christians. After his conversion, Paul continued to be a controversial figure. He experienced conflict with his fellow Christian Church members. One such encounter is reported in the fifteenth chapter of Acts. Paul along with Barnabas was in a dispute with the Jewish Christians that

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[157] Naylor, 142.

[158] Pascuzzi, 42.

[159] Ibid.

believed unless Gentile converts were circumcised according to the custom taught by Moses, they were not really saved. The controversy became so intense they went to Jerusalem to have the Apostles and elders of the Church settle the issue. After some discussion, the Apostles at the council in Jerusalem agreed with Paul and Barnabas that the Gentile Christians did not have to keep Old Testament law.

During the planning of their second missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas had a major disagreement. They were fighting over whether to include John Mark on the journey. Paul did not want Mark to accompany them on the mission. He felt Mark could not be trusted to complete the work since Mark had abandoned them at Perga in Pamphylia during the first missionary journey. So intense was Paul and Barnabas' disagreement that they parted ways. Paul took on Silas as a partner and they went though Syria and Cilicia. John Mark joined his cousin Barnabas and they went to Cyprus. Even though Paul was so adamant about not working with John Mark, he later reconciled with John Mark and worked with him in Colossae.

Paul's interaction with Peter in Antioch as recorded in Paul's Epistle to the Galatians 2:11-14 was confrontational according to Thomas Phillips.[160] In the text, Paul writes he confronted Peter face to face, one on one. Paul accused Peter of being a hypocrite in his treatment of the Gentile Christians. Evidently Peter must have continued his offensive behavior as Paul next opposed Peter publicly in front of everyone in verse fourteen. According to Paul, Peter was not walking upright according to the truth of the

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[160] Thomas E. Phillips, *Paul, His Letters, and Acts*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, LLC, 2009), 152.

Gospel. Paul's treatment of Peter provides direction on what a Christian should do when in conflict with another Christian. An offended Christian should go to the Christian sister or brother to privately discuss the issue and reason together. When that measure proves to be ineffective, in a further effort to lovingly restore the Christian with a fault, it may be necessary to take the matter before the Church as Paul did.

In his book, *The Message of I Corinthians: Life in the Local Church*, David Prior succinctly expresses the Apostle Paul's sentiments and adequately summarizes this author's thoughts and rationale for the project at hand. He writes,

> "Whenever personal relationships become strained within the body of Christ, it is important to identify and use specially gifted members of the congregation to bring the wisdom of God into the situation. Few things impair the witness of a church more than broken relationships. There will always be disagreements amongst Christians, but the disciplined approach of Jesus to such matters needs more uninhibited obedience. The best catalyst for healing fractured relationships is usually those with listening hearts and the patience to hear both sides out to the end. To such a one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom."[161]

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

The systematic theological study of relevant Scripture provides revelation on what God wants us to believe and know. John Macquarrie defines theology "… as the study which, through participation in and reflection upon a religious faith, seeks to express the content of this faith in the clearest and most coherent language available."[162] In his *Principles of Christian Theology*, Macquarrie explains what he calls symbolic theology, as opposed to the more traditional expression dogmatic theology, is specifically Christian

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[161] Prior, 112.

[162] John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology*, 2d ed. (New York: Scribner, 1977), 1.

theology which centers on the revelation given in the person and work of Jesus Christ.[163] He writes, "This revelation has been transmitted in the Christian community, primarily in the scriptures of the community, but also in the community's tradition of life and thought, in which the revelation has already been developed and explicated in ways that have become part of the community's identity…"[164] It is hopeful this theological section will explicate such scriptural revelation, encourage or perhaps even condemn the visible church to incorporate into its tradition of life, thought, identity and witness the biblical way to resolve conflict.

The role of mediator, one who intercedes between opposing parties, is found in both the Old and New Testaments. In the earlier discussion of the selected Old Testament scripture text, Moses the assigned mediator between God and Israel was discussed. United Theological Seminarian, Thomas Bozeman explains that Moses provided a constant lifeline between Yahweh and Israel. He writes, "Moses became a corporate character who mediates divine authority into the religious institutions of law and cultic ritual in ancient Israel."[165] Speaking of Brevard Childs, Bozeman continues, "Childs concludes that the portrayal of Moses as the mediator of covenant must be interpreted institutionally as part of the Mosaic office of ordination in Torah."[166] The discussion of Moses acting in this capacity is present throughout the Old Testament. At this juncture,

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[163] Ibid., 177.

[164] Ibid.

[165] Thomas B. Dozeman, *Holiness and Ministry : A Biblical Theology of Ordination* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 37.

[166] Ibid.

attention will shift to the New Testament to explore the role of mediator as it pertains to Jesus Christ. The biblical conflict resolution model as presented in this project attempts to replicate Jesus in that role and exhibit the essence of the person and the mediatory work of Jesus.

The person of Christ will initially be discussed. Wayne Grudem summarizes the biblical teaching about the person of Jesus the Christ as fully God and fully human in one person.[167] In his discussion of the humanity of Christ, Grudem relies on Scriptural affirmations of the virgin birth of Christ in the books of Matthew and Luke as justification of that doctrine. Jesus had a human body and was born just as all human beings. He grew from childhood to adulthood just as most children. He became thirsty. He became hungry as all humans do. His human body required sleep and rest. Jesus had a human mind. He learned obedience and grew in wisdom. He exhibited human emotions such as anger, sorrow and love. Jesus died. His body ceased to have life and function just like other humans when they die. His death on the cross is the culmination of the limitations of Jesus' human body. [168]

While Jesus was fully human, he is God and fully divine. The Church uses the term Incarnation to refer to Jesus as God in human flesh. New Testament statements and words offer proof for the deity of Christ. Grudem states there are at least seven passages in the New Testament where the word, "God" (theos) is used to refer to Jesus as God.[169]

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[167] Wayne A. Grudem, *Bible Doctrine : Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 229.

[168] Ibid., 231

[169] Ibid., 237.

The word "Lord" (kyrios) is also used in scripture in reference to Christ. The word "Lord," Grudem says is used six thousand eight hundred and fourteen times in the Greek Old Testament and was the name used to refer to omnipotent God, the creator and sustainer of Heaven and earth.[170] In addition to the scriptural usage of the words "God" and "Lord" in reference to Jesus as deity, the title "Son of God," refers to Jesus as the heavenly eternal Son who is equal to God.[171]

Many things Jesus did during His physical lifetime on earth point to His deity. Only as God could He have stilled the storm at sea, multiplied fish and loaves of bread enough to feed over five thousand or have turned water into vintage wine. Only as an all knowing God could Jesus know people's thoughts or the belief and disbelief in the hearts of people. Only as God could Jesus speak with the authority of God because He is fully God. A final attestation to the deity of Christ is found in the ninth through eleventh verses of chapter two in the Book of Philippians. Scripture declares, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

The concept of Incarnation has been debated and believed from the early history of the Church. The debate centers on how full deity and full humanity could be combined together in one person, Jesus. The church's conviction Jesus is fully human and fully God

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[170] Ibid.

[171] Grudem, 239.

is a paradox. By definition, a paradox is something that cannot logically be true and yet is true.[172] This belief is the biggest and most confusing paradox in Christian faith. Humans often deal with and attempt to resolve this paradox with a rational mind by believing Jesus is fully human or fully God but that he is not both. The person and work of Jesus go together concludes Robinson but nevertheless the distinction has value. The person and work expose different aspects of the whole event and experience of Jesus Christ.[173]

In light of the lack of understanding and confusion regarding Incarnation, a large church council met in Chalcedon near Constantinople in October to November in 451 AD to ponder and settle the issue. The resultant statement, the Chalcedonian definition clarified biblical teaching on the fully divine and fully human person of Christ. It is still considered to be the standard for Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox branches of Christianity.[174]

The atoning work of Christ should be included in any discussion of the theological foundation of a biblical conflict resolution model that seeks to reconcile Christians in conflict. However, before that undertaking, the perspective from which the work of Jesus will be approached should be clarified. In *The Work of Christ* Robert Letham makes it clear there is unity of the person and work of Christ. He writes, "What Christ has done is directly related to who he is. It is the uniqueness of his person that

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[172] Anthony B. Robinson, *What's Theology Got to Do with It: Convictions, Vitality and the Church* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2006), 123.

[173] Ibid., 124.

[174] Grudem, 241.

determines the efficacy of his work." [175]As verification of his statement, Letham quotes John Calvin's argument that Christ's atoning sacrifice must be attributed to his being both divine and human.[176]

Karl Barth concurs. In his *Doctrine of Reconciliation,* referring to Jesus Christ, he writes "He is very God acting for us… He is the authentic Revealer of God as Himself God."[177] And, in *Church Dogmatics,* Barth writes, "The person and work of Jesus Christ are one, and cannot be separated even for the purpose of study. All that he is, is also His 'work' for men;"[178] In agreement with Barth, G.C. Berkouwer expands such thinking and proffers in the study of Christ, it is impossible to separate his person from his work. "There is such an inseparable connection between his person and work that any separation causes us to go astray with respect to both his person and his work" he writes.[179] In an effort to further expand on that thought, Paul Tillich writes, "Many of the these semimechanistic mistakes in the doctrine of salvation could have been avoided if the principle had been accepted that the being of the Christ is his work and that his work

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[175] Robert Letham, *The Work of Christ: Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 24.

[176] Ibid., 25.

[177] Barth, 152.

[178] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, trans., G.W. Bromiley (Louisville, KY: Westminister John Knox Press, 1961), 92.

[179] G.C. Berkouwer, *The Work of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), 19.

is his being, namely the New Being which is his being."[180] The unity of person and work is the perspective as the discussion of Jesus the mediator continues.

The Expository Dictionary of Bible Words says the word, "mesites," is utilized in the New Testament to convey the precise sense of mediator. In Galatians 3:19 and 20, the word is used to specifically refer to Moses as the mediator of the old covenant. The same word in First Timothy 2:5 refers to Christ as the mediator of the new covenant.[181] The definition continues and explains, "...the ultimate mediation between God and humankind is realized in the person of Jesus Christ, who is described as the sole mediator between God and humankind."[182] Karl Barth expressed it this way: "Between God and man there stands the person of Jesus Christ, Himself God and Himself man, and so mediating between the two."[183] He further elaborates that it means God has become human in order to take up our case; overruling God to close the breach, the gulf, the abyss between Creator and creation.[184]

The term mediator is also applied to the Christ acknowledges Tillich. Use of the idea of mediator-gods to bridge the gap between men and the highest gods who have become increasingly transcendent and abstract has deep roots in the history of religion.

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[180] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology: Existence and the Christ*, 3 vols., vol. II (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 168.

[181] Stephen Renn, ed. *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words: Word Studies for Key English Bible Words Based on the Hebrew and Greek Texts* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2005), 629.

[182] Ibid., 630.

[183] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 110.

[184] Ibid., 112.

He further explains however, this perspective is only one element in the idea of the Mediator. The other is Jesus' function to reunite what is estranged. "He is Mediator in so far as he is supposed to reconcile. He represents God toward man and man toward God. Both elements of the idea of the mediator have been applied to Jesus as the Christ. In his face we see the face of God, and in him we experience the reconciling will of God; in both respects he is the Mediator."[185] The term "Mediator" is not without theological difficulty. He writes, "It can suggest that the Mediator is a third reality on which both God and men are dependent for revelation and reconciliation."[186] To clarify this misleading thought, Tillich declares, "God reveals himself to us and reconciles us to him through the Mediator. God is always the one who acts, and the Mediator is the one through whom he acts."[187]

The definition of atonement according to Wayne Grudem is: "the work Christ did in his life and death to earn our salvation."[188] Barth writes, "Jesus Christ exists in the totality of his work as the Mediator."[189] In agreement with Barth, Macquarrie adds that the Church has never formulated a doctrine of the atonement as it did to define the person of Christ.[190] He presents the classic view of atonement: the work of Christ was finished on the cross. The cross summarizes the totality of Jesus' life and work. In the New

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[185] Tillich, 169.

[186] Ibid.

[187] Ibid., 170.

[188] Grudem, 248.

[189] Barth, *The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, 147.

[190] Macquarrie, 314.

Testament the work of Jesus is portrayed as a battle against the demons that afflict the life of mankind. "Jesus comes into this situation and battles against these powers; with his cross comes the overwhelming victory, bringing deliverance and new life to man." [191]

The words sin, condemnation, justice, sacrifice, obedience, expiation, propitiation, redemption and reconciliation intertwine and are empirical to the understanding of the nature and need of atonement. Specifically, the disobedience and original sin of mankind plunged humanity into sin, eternal condemnation and into conflict with Holy God. God's justice requires punishment of sin. The wages of sin is death. But the sacrificial death of Jesus was a better sacrifice than any sacrifice under the Mosaic tradition. "Christ's sacrifice is perfect because of its nature: Christ offered himself."[192] Christ completely obeyed God, willingly keeping the precepts of God's law and ultimately suffering the penalties on behalf of humankind. "Christ's whole life was one of obedience up to and including his death, thus forming the one obedience and righteousness, which is no more to be divided than is Christ's person."[193]

The consequence of Christ enduring the curse of the law in mankind's place is that our sins are forgiven. Christ paid the debt and freed humankind from the burden which sin entailed. Divine justice has been satisfied. Expiation, the removal of the guilt of sin was accomplished. Christ's death in our stead placated God's wrath that was directed toward mankind. Propitiation was the provision and manifestation of God's

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[191] Ibid., 318.

[192] Letham, 128.

[193] Ibid., 130.

divine love in accordance with God's justice. "It shows the cost that redemptive love entails."[194] The blood of Christ shed on the cross was the ransom, the payment to deliver human creation from the bondage of sin and to Satan.

The meditative work of Jesus was accomplished so humans could be reconciled with God, their Creator. Christ brought humankind out of a state of enmity, out of conflict with God into friendship with God. Men and women are now in harmony with God through the atoning work of Christ. Lethum declares, "The original fellowship that Adam enjoyed with God before the fall has been restored."[195]

Reconciliation is discussed in several places in the New Testament. The Apostle Paul speaks of it in the first chapter of his epistle to the Colossians in verses twenty and twenty-one: "And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled." Paul shares this theme with the Hebrews in his letter to them. In Hebrews 8:6, Paul is speaking of Christ when he writes, "But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises." Giving further explanation in Hebrews 9:15, Paul continues, "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal life." And again in Second

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[194] Ibid., 142.

[195] Letham, 143.

Corinthians 5:19 Paul explains, "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation."

The above scriptures demonstrate reconciliation is clearly a work of God which has taken place in Christ. This ongoing ministry of reconciliation Paul speaks about, according to Letham is, "… grounded on the definitive work which God himself achieved in Christ."[196] However, the foundational act of reconciliation did not just occur vertically between God and humankind. It must also be realized horizontally between humans. Restoration of human relationships is of paramount importance and is an essential feature of what reconciliation is.[197]

The ongoing ministry of reconciliation entrusted to the Apostle Paul has also been given to every Christian. In Second Corinthians 2:18, Paul writes, "And all things are of God who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." The ministry is given by God to those who themselves have been reconciled through Christ, meaning the church.

The linking of the ministry of the Church and the ministry of Christ is fundamental believes John Macquarrie.[198] The ministry of Jesus is essential according to Walter Brueggemann, because if a society does not have an apparatus for forgiveness,

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[196] Ibid., 147.

[197] Ibid.

[198] Macquarrie, 420.

then its members are fated to live forever with the consequences of any violation.[199] Christian ministry exhibits the many dimensions of who Christ is and the work of his ministry. He is Love, obedient Servant, Good Shepherd, Mediator and intercessor. The mediation work of Jesus on behalf of the church must be emulated by the church to reconcile relationships and facilitate unity between those in conflict in the church. Grudem writes, "The unity of the church is its degree of freedom from divisions among true Christians."[200]

In the Gospel according to John 10:16, Jesus speaks of such unity. Speaking about the Gentiles, Jesus says, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." Later in that same book, in chapter seventeen, verse twenty-one Jesus spoke these words: "That they all may be one; as thou Father, art in me. And I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."Again in the last verse of the ninth chapter of Mark, Jesus tells the church, "… have peace one with another." In explicit language, Jesus tells his disciples in John, 13:34: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." The commandment is interpreted by Obery Hendricks: "Jesus simply taught the men and women who heeded his call to put their love for God into practice by loving their neighbors as themselves."[201]

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[199] Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortess Press, 1978), 83.

[200] Grudem, 372.

[201] Obery M. Hendricks, *The Politics of Jesus: Rediscovering the True Revolutionary Nature of the Teachings of Jesus and How They Have Been Corrupted* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2006), 101.

In addition to the message elaborated in the selected New Testament text, the message of unity of the church is prevalent in other places in the Apostle Paul's epistles to the various churches. For example, he writes, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" in First Corinthians 1:10. Paul repeats the same message in his second letter to the Corinthian church in 13:11. He expresses himself plainly for the church in Colossi in Colossians 3:13, "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man has a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, also do ye." He gives the same instructions in his first letter to the church at Thessalonica in Thessalonians 5:11: "Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do." Unity is accomplished when God's people are of the same love, in full accord with and of the same mind as Christ Jesus. The expression of such love and unity is witness to unbelievers.

When Christians do disagree, John Calvin believed the matter should be resolved before believing judges and not before unbelievers. He said, "… in pursuing their quarrels before the courts of the unbelievers, they were giving a bad name to the Gospel, and reducing it to a public laughing stock."[202] Calvin further explains, "For the ungodly, prompted by Satan, are always on the alert, eager for opportunities to find something in the teaching of religion, which they may misrepresent. But when believers disclose the

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[202] John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries: The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, trans., John W. Fraser (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1960; reprint, Sixth reprinting, November 1980), 117.

details of their quarrels to them, they seem to be offering them, almost on purpose, a golden opportunity for calumny."[203]

The aim of this project is to minister to the church. The intent is to mature the Body of Christ. Paul writes in the first chapter of Colossians in the twenty-eighth verse, "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." Wayne Grudem concurs and writes, "According to Scripture, the church has an obligation to nurture those who are already believers and build them up to maturity in the faith." [204]It is through the teaching and preaching that the saints will be perfected, will mature, and will live in the unity of the faith and the knowledge of Christ.

As early as the year 401, St Augustine subscribed to such thinking and recognized the need to teach and mature his fellow monks in this area. In his letter entitled, *Of the Work of Monks*, he discusses his work as mediator, "…these most annoying perplexities of other men's causes about secular matters, which we must either by adjudication bring to an end, or by intervention cut short."[205] While he appeared to find the need for such teaching disturbing, he believed he was mandated by Scripture to serve and strengthen the Church in that capacity. Jesus is love. Love and the work of Jesus Christ, the Mediator, is the crux of the project at hand. When faced with conflict, the Body of Christ

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[203] Ibid.

[204] Grudem, 373.

[205] St. Augustine, "Of the Work of Monks", Christianbookshelf.org http://christianbookshelf.org/augustine/of_the_work_of_monks/section_37_we_are_not.htm (accessed 11/03/2010).

must not react using the two options ingrained in the world – flight or fight. According to Walter Wink, Jesus offers a third way. "With Jesus a way emerges by which evil can be opposed without being mirrored."[206] Jesus' Third Way among other things, calls for Christians in dispute to recognize his or her own power as a child of God and to be willing to suffer rather than to retaliate.[207] Just as Jesus is the intermediary that brought about conciliation between Holy God and sinful mankind, the project seeks to have the people of God to be like Jesus and be intermediaries that facilitate the conciliation of Christians in conflict with each other.

The Body of Christ must be able to victoriously deal with conflict. "Congregations that neither recognize nor accurately name and then deal with and resolve conflicts tend to be unhealthy" writes Anthony Robinson writes.[208] He laments that issues and conflicts in such churches never seem to be resolved. People in such congregations avoid talking to the person or persons with whom they have an issue. Instead they gossip and backbite about the person behind their back. In such congregations, the truth is often not spoken because of fear of starting a conflict. Robinson also offers hope and describes healthy and vital congregations. He writes these "… are ones where conflict is recognized, helpfully and accurately named and framed, then dealt with according to fair, reasonable, and understood protocols or practices."[209]

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[206] Walter Wink, *Jesus and Nonviolence: A Third Way* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), 27.

[207] Ibid.

[208] Robinson, *What's Theology Got to Do with It: Convictions, Vitality and the Church*, 28.

[209] Ibid.

The old colloquialism: when you know better you should do better, must be a controlling motivation in the life of a Christian. Dissecting the phrase, "know better" is tantamount to "do better". As a Christian knows better of the Way, he or she should do better. It is a matter of practicing ones Christian faith. The action verb "do" in this statement segues to the brief discussion of Practical Theology and how it relates to biblical conflict resolution.

In his book entitled, *Practical Theology,* Gerben Heitink describes practical theology as a theory of action. He writes it "is the empirically oriented theological theory of the mediation of the Christian faith in the praxis of modern society."[210] The word "praxis" does not mean "practice" but rather refers to action or activity Heitink further explains. "God's action mediated through human action is the theological center of gravity of practical theology."[211] It is the didache, that part of the Gospel that refers to the ways in which Christians who responded to God's saving act in Jesus will now live in the world.[212] The term, "practices" is used by Miroslav Volf in the sense of cooperative and meaningful human endeavors that seek to satisfy fundamental human needs and conditions and that people do together over time.[213]

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[210] Gerben Heitink, *Practical Theology: History, Theory, Action Domains: Manual for Practical Theology* ed. James W. Fowler Don S.Browning, Friedrich Schweitzer and Johannes A. van der Ven, trans., Reinder Bruinsma, Studies in Practical Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 6.

[211] Ibid., 8.

[212] Ralph G. Turnbull, ed. *Baker's Dictionary of Practical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1967), 415.

[213] Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass, ed. *Practical Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: William Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 248.

In his chapter entitled "Practical Theology the Shaping of Christian Lives" James Fowler writes, "Practical Theology is theological reflection and construction arising out of and giving guidance to a community of faith in the praxis of its mission."[214] Practical Theology, Fowler further explains, "is critical and constructive reflection on the praxis of the Christian community's life and work in its various dimensions. It has and must exercise direct access to the sources and theology in Scripture and tradition."[215]

In volume one of *Systematic Theology: Reason and Revelation Being and God,* Paul Tillich writes that practical theology is implicit in the doctrine of the functions of the church. He says, "Theology itself is such a function, and its institutional realization within the life of the church is one of the many concerns of practical theology."[216] Practical theology can preserve the church from traditionalism and dogmatism and induce society to take the church seriously.[217]

In his discussion of the Apostle Paul, theology and practices, Miroslav Volf addresses the mistaken distinction some New Testament scholars make regarding the indicative and imperative sections of Paul's writings. This distinction puts the indicative sections first because they are foundational and doctrinal. They are of primary importance because they explicate Christian beliefs. The imperative sections are

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[214] Don S. Browning, ed. *Practical Theology: The Emerging Field in Theology, Church and World* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row Publishers, 1983), 149.

[215] Ibid.

[216] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology: Reason and Revelation Being and God*, 3 vols., vol. one (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 33.

[217] Ibid., 34.

secondary because they are ethical and admonish to Christian practices. They are grounded in beliefs.[218] Uncomfortable with making such a distinction, Volf feels to do so is distortion. He subscribes to Troels Engberg- Pedersen's thinking that the parenetic sections in Paul's letters "… are an exercise in parenesis. Parenesis has two components, a doctrinal and ethical one, for it consists in Paul's reminding his addresses of what has happened and his appeal to them to put it into practice."[219] In the final paragraphs of his book, Volf suggests: "Like Paul, we should resolutely place theology in the service of practices and precisely for this reason concentrate our reflection on God, for whose sake we live a Christian way of life and therefore, as theologians, engage in explicating Christian beliefs."[220]

Such is the resolve of this project. As shown by the statistics presented earlier, Christians are not resolving their conflicts as demonstrated and mandated by Jesus Christ. In light of this present situation and state of ecclesial ministry, this project has sought to investigate Scripture and Christian tradition for the sake of constructive and critical guidance of the church's praxis when it comes to conflict resolution. From a practical theological perspective, this project seeks to become the bridge between the Christian message and the human situation specifically in this area.

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[218] Bass, ed., 262.

[219] Ibid.

[220] Ibid.

In conclusion, Maria Harris writes, "… the word of God is addressing us, saying something to us, making demands on us, and asking us to live that word in our lives."[221] The only issue remaining is, now that we know better, will we do better? Will we practice the theology we profess as Christians? It is hopeful this work can be the catharsis to assist the Body of Christ in that endeavor and foster congregational love, peace and vitality.

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[221] Maria Harris, *Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1989), 24.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

HYPOTHESIS

The purpose of the project is to equip the Church to successfully manage conflict. The hypothesis of this project is that practicing Christians will resolve their disputes among themselves and reconcile relationships when provided biblical instruction on conflict resolution, information on the dynamics of conflict, personal conflict style assessments, and mediation skill training. Equipped with such skills and information, God's people will be able to victoriously live out their ministry of reconciliation.

INTERVENTION

The writer's initial step was to approach Rev. Dr. Clarence H. Burke, the pastor of the context church, Beacon Light Missionary Baptist Church to dialogue about the writer's proposed project. At that meeting, the writer attempted to express her perceived dire need and benefit of such a project to the Church in general. The writer also discussed how such a project might personally bless the context ministry in light of it tumultuous beginnings.

The writer and Pastor Burke discussed details about the circumstances that led to the founding of the church in 1993. He also mentioned the dispute that culminated in a lawsuit between the pastor he succeeded and the congregation. Pastor Burke identified various members with first- hand knowledge of those apparently conflictive circumstances. The writer was able to talk to a few of the Beacon Light founding members. They were helpful in providing background information and insight into what had occurred at Beacon Light. The information confirmed the writer's perceived need for a biblically based process Christians could and should rely on to guide them through situations such as above.

The initial phase of the intervention project was to use the preached Word as an instructional tool to approach the subject of biblical conflict resolution to the entire church body. It was determined two sermons would be preached on the subject as the Holy Spirit led. Pastor Burke preached the initial sermon and the writer preached the second sermon. It was strategically planned to have the second sermon preached close to the start of the project instructional sessions. The instructional sessions were to take place during the annual vacation Bible study week. Historically during vacation Bible study attendance is large.

On May 2, 2010, Pastor Burke preached a sermon entitled, *Anger Management – God's Way!* His outline for the sermon is in Appendix A. The Scriptural text for the sermon was James 1:19-22. The inspired message shared keys to help Christians diffuse their anger and be at peace with God and each other. The initial point advised the congregation to be quick to listen. It explained how we should avoid angry situations and

assume a listening posture. The second point of the sermon was to be slow to speak. In showing such restraint, it allows time for one to weigh their words and understand the situation. The third point admonished God's children to be slow to anger. Pastor Burke explained how anger is a waste of energy, produces divisions, and often comes from a place of selfish ambition.

On May 30, 2010, this writer preached a sermon entitled, "Praying For Conflict Resolution." The sermon text can be found in Appendix B. The biblical text of the sermon was Philippians 4:2-7. The text centers on the conflict between Euodia and Syntyche, two faithful workers and members of the Church at Philippi. The teaching sermon identified and shared the Apostle Paul's five lessons on the subject. The first four lessons share how Christians should respond to one another in the midst of conflict. The fifth lesson gives instruction on how Christians should pray when in conflict.

In the first lesson, Paul instructs Christians that disputing parties must work through the situation together. The second lesson encourages Christians to get help from other Christians if necessary to resolve the dispute. The third lesson Paul conveys is that disputing parties need to rejoice in the Lord always and to celebrate each other as sisters and brothers in Christ. In the fourth lesson Paul is reminding us to be gracious and gentle toward each other. The final lesson is perhaps the most important. It reminds us not to be anxious about anything. We don't need to protect ourselves. Instead we just need to trust God to work out a dispute between Christians in a way that is best for all.

FOCUS GROUP

A focus group was formed to test the writer's hypothesis. Beacon Light congregants were invited to come out to the week-long annual vacation Bible study. The project participants were primarily Beacon Light members. There were also three non Beacon Light members in the focus group. There were a total of seventeen people in the focus group.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Pursuant to research in *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches Second Edition*, by John W. Creswell, the writer chose the qualitative method of research approach as the framework of this action research project.[1] According to Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, the authors of *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, all data are qualitative.[2] In their book, these authors focus on data in the form of words based on observations, interviews, and documents.

The Miles and Huberman's view of qualitative analysis is best suited for the project. They define analysis as three concurrent flows of activity. The first, data reduction, refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and

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[1] John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* Second ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage publications, Inc., 2003).

[2] Matthew B. Miles and Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook* Second ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994), 9.

transforming the data as it appears in the conflict resolution instruments.[3] The next activity is data display.

A display, writes Miles and Huberman, "is an organized, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action."[4] Conclusion drawing and verification is the third activity. In this activity, the qualitative analyst notes regularities, patterns, explanations possible casual flows and positions. The authors, however, maintain the researcher should hold such conclusions lightly and should maintain openness and skepticism.[5] This is the process the writer has attempted to follow in performing a critical analysis of the project data.

MEASUREMENT

During the initial fifteen minutes of the first instructional session, participants were given the *Style Matters: The Kraybill Conflict Style Inventory.*[6] A copy of the inventory is found in Appendix C. In an effort to save valuable instruction time, the writer gave written instructions and tally sheets to each participant for them to score and record their responses at home. Participants were further instructed to bring the inventory and their results back to the next session for discussion.

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[3] Ibid., 10.

[4] Ibid., 11.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ron Kraybill, "Style Matters: The Kraybill Conflict Style Inventory", Riverhouse ePress http://RiverhouseEpress.com/StyleMattersReviewCopy.pdf (accessed 12/07/2009).

Kraybill's inventory helps people recognize and to effectively use five styles of responding to conflict. These styles, cooperating, directing, compromising, avoiding and harmonizing can be used when a conflict is calm and first arises as well as when a conflict escalates to a storm or causes stress to rise.[7] The inventory was given to the participants to draw out their honest, gut level conflict behavior.

Equipped with such knowledge, the participants would be able to identify their individualized conflict management responses at various levels when a conflict first arises, when things escalate or when stress rises in a conflict. After completing the inventory, participants will also be able to recognize those conflict styles at work in others. Such information will equip the participants not only to check themselves but also in a potentially conflictive situation to be able to respond to the other person's behavior in a manner that will defuse a conflict or prevent a conflict.

The writer constructed a Christian Conflict Resolution Inventory in an attempt to measure the level of knowledge of the participants on biblical conflict resolution principles. The inventory was also given to the participants during the first session before any instruction. As practicing Christians, the writer wanted to explore the participants' attitudes and knowledge about what the Bible instructed a Christian to do in times of personal conflict. The statements were devised using key words, phrases and concepts on the Kraybill Conflict Style Inventory the participants took and the material in the instructional sessions.

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[7] Ibid.

INSTRUMENTATION

Christian Conflict Resolution Inventory

The design of the project instrument, the Christian Conflict Resolution Inventory Questionnaire, was modeled after the Likert scale also known as a summative scale and can be found in Appendix E. While not a true Likert scale, the Likert-like scale instrument used in the questionnaire was designed to measure participants' attitudes. Participants were asked to use a legend to select the numbered frequency that best describes what you, as a practicing Christian, do when involved in a dispute with a fellow Christian brother or sister. The questionnaire consisted of twenty statements.

The five responses were numbered one to five, and went from an extreme negative position to a corresponding positive position on the opposite end of the spectrum. Participants were asked to choose from: (1) = never, (2) = rarely, (3) = sometimes, (4) = usually or (5) = always. The definition for never in this context is that the scenario in the statement does not ever occur. Rarely means the scenario in the statement does not ordinarily occur. The sometimes response means the scenario does occur on various occasions. Usually denotes the scenario does occur most of the time. Finally, the response always was to be chosen if the participant believed the scenario in the statement does occur every time. The frequency of a response for each statement on the pre test and post test were tabulated and analyzed to determine changes in frequency of a particular response before the instructional sessions and after the instructional sessions.

INSTRUCTIONAL SESSIONS

As previously mentioned, there were five instructional sessions during the course of the week. The lessons came from *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict* by Ken Sande.[8] Sande is an attorney and president of Peacemaker Ministries, which was discussed earlier in Chapter Two. As an experienced conciliator, Sande has worked for several years with churches, pastors and others to resolve conflicts outside the courtroom. In his book, Sande presents a simple and comprehensive approach to resolving conflict. He summarizes the approach by the use of four basic principles from the Word of God which he calls the four "G's" of peacemaking. One principle was taught each night and on the fifth night a summary of the four principles was presented.

The first "G" is glorify God. It is based on 1Cor. 10:31. "We can find freedom from the impulsive, self-centered decisions that make conflict worse, and bring praise to God by displaying the power of the gospel in our lives" writes Sande.[9] The second "G" is get the log out of your eye. This principle is based on Matt. 7:5. Jesus teaches we must face up to our own contribution to a conflict before we focus on what someone else has done. Gently restore is the third "G". It comes from Gal. 6:1. Jesus teaches in this principle that when a Christian fails to see their contribution in a dispute, we are to involve other objective persons who can encourage the parties to repentance and to

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[8] Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker : A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004).

[9] Ibid., 12.

restore peace. The final "G" is go and be reconciled. This principle requires a commitment to reconciling damaged relationships and negotiating just agreements.[10]

When Christians are bitterly embroiled in disputes or coldly estranged from one another because of a dispute, the world will not pay attention to us when we try to talk to them about the reconciling love of Jesus Christ. The opposite is also true. When Christians learn to be peacemakers, they can turn conflict into an opportunity to strengthen relationships, preserve valuable resources and make their lives a living testimony of the love and power of Christ.

It was the writer's expectation that the combination of the sermons, the Kraybill Conflict Style Inventory, the Christian Conflict Resolution Inventory, and the instructional sessions would increase focus group knowledge about biblical conflict resolution. The prevailing thought is the intervention will cause participants to make some substantive observations about themselves. Hopefully, the candid and comprehensive look will alter the focus group participants' attitudes.

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[10] Ibid., 13.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

All participants in the project focus group were adults. All but one of the participants is African American. One is Hispanic. Seven of the participants were males. The remaining ten participants were females. The average age of the participants was sixty-one years of age. Six of the seven men are sixty-five years of age or older and are retirees. The youngest participants were two females under the age of forty. All participants have a high school education or above. Seven of the participants are Beacon Light Missionary Baptist Church founding members and served the Church since its inception.

PARTICIPANT ATTENDANCE

The project conflict resolution training and skills course consisted of five, one hour sessions given on five consecutive evenings beginning on Monday, June 21, 2010 and ending on Friday, June 25, 2010. A total of seventeen people attended the course throughout the week. Eight of the seventeen participants attended all five sessions. Three participants attended the training for four days. Four persons attended three days of the

course and two persons attended two days of the course. The Attendance analysis can be found in Appendix F.

CONFLICT STYLE INVENTORY RESULTS

Approximately fifty percent of the seventeen participants, nine people, returned a completed conflict style inventory and tally sheet. A third of the nine participants who completed the style inventory regularly used cooperating and avoiding styles when conflict first arises in their life and things are relatively calm. Two participants use compromising as the style they use in that situation. One person indicated he or she used the directing style when conflict first arises.

When a conflict has escalated to storm and the stress level is high, three participants chose cooperating and three chose directing as the style they use most when in this kind of conflict. The next highest style chosen was harmonizing. Two participants chose that style. One participant indicated he or she uses the avoiding style when a conflict has escalated. The style inventory tally can be found in Appendix D.

CHRISTIAN CONFLICT RESOLUTION INVENTORY PRE TEST RESULTS

A total of eleven of the seventeen participants took the Christian Conflict Resolution Inventory prior to any instructional sessions. The pre test was done in an attempt to assess the participants' Christian conflict resolution base knowledge and practices. The eleven participants responded to each of the twenty statements in the inventory with the exception of one.

One participant did not respond to statement sixteen: "***I respond to conflict according to biblical principles***." The eleven participants in the focus group who took the pre test, selected "sometimes" seventy-two times to respond to the inventory statements. It was selected more than any other response. The next most frequently selected response was "usually". "Always" and "rarely" were selected almost equally at thirty-four and thirty-five times respectively. "Never" was selected as a response eleven times. A chart with the number of people who chose each response for each statement is in Appendix G.

CHRISTIAN CONFLICT RESOLUTION INVENTORY POST TEST RESULTS

Ten of the total seventeen project participants took the Christian Conflict Resolution Inventory as a post test. Two of the ten participants who took the Christian Conflict Resolution Inventory as a post test did not take it as a pre test or before they attended any instructional sessions. Eight of those same participants completed as a post test the same inventory they completed as a pre test. The purpose in administering the same pre test instrument as a post test and after the instructional sessions was to determine if there were any changes in participant responses after the instructional sessions.

Three of the participants who took the post test did not respond to statement nineteen: "***I admit when I am wrong in a conflict***." The ten participants who took the post test chose the response, "sometimes" seventy-two times. "Usually" was selected sixty times and was the next frequently selected response to the statements. "Rarely" was selected twenty-seven times and "always" was chosen twenty-three times. The "never"

response was selected the least, fourteen times. A chart of post test results can be found in Appendix H.

CHRISTIAN CONFLICT RESOLUTION INVENTORY RESPONSE ANALYSIS

The data and analysis of participant responses to each statement before instructional sessions, (pre test) and after instructional sessions, (post test) are presented below. A graphic representation of participant item by item Christian Conflict Resolution Inventory responses can be found in Appendix I. As a reminder, the definitions of the possible responses are as follows. "Rarely" means the scenario in the statement does not ordinarily occur. The "sometimes" response means the scenario does occur on various occasions. "Usually" denotes the scenario does occur most of the time. Finally, the response "always" was to be chosen if the participant believed the scenario in the statement does occur every time.

1. ***I respond to the person I am in conflict with in a way that is different than the world does.***

At the pre test stage, fifty-five percent, six participants, reported they sometimes respond to the person they are in conflict with in a way that is different than the world does. The greatest number of participants chose that rating for this statement. Twenty-seven percent, or three people, indicated usually they respond to the person they are in conflict with in a way that is different. Eighteen percent of the respondents, two people, said they always respond to the person they are in conflict with in a way that is different

than the world does. No participants indicated that they never or rarely respond in a way that is different than the world does.

During the post test, sixty percent or six participants indicated they usually respond to a person they are in conflict with in a way that is different than the world does. The greatest number of participants chose that rating for that statement after the project intervention during the post test. Twenty percent or two persons said they sometimes and the remaining twenty percent said they always responded differently than the world does.

The data results reveal changes in how participants responded to this statement pre test and post test after the biblical conflict resolution instructional intervention sessions. In the pre test, the majority of participants indicated by their sometimes and usually responses that they respond as the world does most of the time. After the instructional sessions, there was an increase in the number of participants that indicated they settle conflicts differently than the world does. There was a decrease in the number of participants that settle conflicts differently some of the time and the number of participants that respond differently all the time remained the same.

2. ***I pray before I speak when involved in a conflict.***

During the pre test, twenty-seven percent or three people indicated they sometimes prayed before they spoke when involved in a conflict. The number of participants who chose the remaining four responses, never, rarely, usually and always was equal. Two participants chose each of those responses respectively.

During the post test, the highest number of participants, six, chose the response sometimes indicating they prayed sometimes before they spoke when involved in a conflict. They represent sixty percent of the participants. This was a thirty-three percent increase in the number of participants that sometimes prayed. The next highest response chosen was usually. Twenty percent or two people said they usually prayed before they spoke. One participant said he or she rarely prayed before they spoke. One other participant indicated he or she always prayed before he or she spoke when involved in a conflict. After the educational sessions at post testing, no participants responded that they never prayed before they spoke when involved in a conflict.

This set of data suggests that before participants attended the instructional sessions several participants did pray before they spoke when involved in a conflict. The number of participants that choose the remaining ratings were the same. After the instructional sessions, there were twice as many participants that indicated they prayed sometimes. There was also a two percent increase in the number of participants that indicated they prayed usually. Surprisingly, less people indicated they prayed always after the instructional sessions than prior to them. However, one less participant on the pre test said on the post test that he or she rarely prayed before speaking when involved in a conflict.

3. ***I focus on the harm the conflict may have on my relationship with the other person.***

Almost half, forty-five percent, of the participants admitted during the pre test that sometimes they focus on the harm the conflict may have on their relationship with the

other person. Three people, who represent approximately twenty-seven percent of the participants, indicated they usually focus on the harm the conflict may have on the relationship. Only two people said they always focus on the harm. One person reported he or she rarely focused on the harm the conflict may have on their relationship with the other person.

During the post test, the percentage of persons who usually focused on the harm the conflict may have on their relationship with the other person increased three percentage points. The number that sometimes focused on the harm decreased from forty-five percent to thirty percent. Conversely, the number of participants that indicated on the post test they always focused on the harm the conflict may have on the relationship increased from eighteen percent to thirty percent.

This set of data suggests that even before participants attended the instructional sessions almost half considered the harm conflict would have on a relationship some of the time. After the instructional sessions there was an overall increase in the number of participants that focused on the harm conflict could have on a relationship. Post test there were no participant who never or rarely focused on the harm of conflict to a relationship.

4. I focus on how I might glorify God in a conflict.

Based on the responses in the pre test, thirty-six percent, or four participants, sometimes focused on how they might glorify God when in a conflict. This was the largest group. In a close second position, twenty-seven percent of the participants indicated they usually focused on how they might glorify God when in a conflict. Two

participants said they always focused on how they might glorify God when a conflictive situation. One honest participant shared that he or she rarely focused on how he or she might glorify God when in a conflict.

There were not any significant changes in the post test of number of participants that sometimes or usually focused on how they might glorify God in a conflict. The number that responded sometimes decreased. The number that responded they usually focused on how they might glorify God increased. The most significant change was in the number of participants that said they always focused on how they might glorify God in a conflict. Twice as many participants indicated they always focused on how they might glorify God after the instructional sessions.

This data suggests that before participants attended the instructional sessions they would focus on glorifying God in a conflict only sometimes. After the instructional sessions the participants indicated they focused to glorify God when in a conflict most of the time. Further, since no participant after the instructional sessions rarely or never focused on glorifying God when in a conflict, the participants may have sought to focus on how to glorify God when in that situation.

5. ***I immediately forgive and do not dwell on the incident when someone offends me or treats me wrong.***

Interestingly, approximately half of the participants indicated on the pre test that they sometimes immediately forgave and did not dwell on the incident when someone offended or treated them wrong. Another forty-five percent said they usually did the same

thing. Only one participant indicated he or she always forgave and did not dwell on the incident when someone hurt or offended him or her.

During the post test, the number of participants that responded sometimes to this statement remained virtually unchanged. However, the number of people who said they usually forgave and did not dwell on the incident dropped from forty-five percent in the pre test to twenty percent in the post test. Twenty percent or two people said in the post test they rarely immediately forgave and did not dwell on the incident when someone offended them or treated them wrong. In contrast, one person said he or she always immediately forgave and did not dwell on the incident when someone offended or mistreated him or her.

This set of data suggests the instructional sessions did little to change the number of participants who sometimes immediately forgave and didn't dwell on the conflict. Less than in the pre test, participants forgave their offender usually. Further, after the instructional sessions, during the post test, there were two people who rarely wanted to immediately forgive and not dwell on the incident. This result was puzzling since there were no participants who indicated on the pre test before the participants attended the instructional sessions that and he or she rarely wanted to immediately forgive.

6. *I first examine myself to determine my contribution to the conflict.*

Thirty-six percent or four people indicated on the pre test they always first examine themselves to determine their contribution to a conflict. Three participants which is approximately twenty-seven percent of the participants responded they first examine

themselves. The same number of people responded they usually and rarely examine themselves to determine their contribution in a conflict. Two participants chose each of those two responses. No one chose never as a response.

On the post test, sixty percent of the participants responded that they sometimes first examine themselves to determine their contribution in the conflict. This was a thirty-three percent increase over the number who chose that response in the pre test. There was a decrease in the numbers of the participants that chose each of the other responses. Twenty percent or two people chose always. This is half the people who chose that response in the pre test. One person selected usually and one person chose rarely. This was a decrease for each of those responses.

This set of data suggests before participants attended the instructional sessions many of the participants always examined themselves to determine their contribution to the conflict. This self examination was also done by several participants some of the time. After the instructional sessions, it was interesting the number of people who indicated they always examined themselves decreased instead of increase. However, there was a decrease in those who responded they rarely examined. Again, no participant selected never as a response in the post test.

7. ***I seek to repair and take responsibility for any harm to the other person.***

Most participants claimed on the pre test they seek to repair and take responsibility for any harm they may cause to the other person in a conflict. Thirty-six percent or four people responded they always seek to repair and take responsibility. Another thirty-six

percent indicated they usually seek to repair and take responsibility for any harm. Two people chose sometimes as a response to the statement. One person, or ten percent chose rarely and no one chose never as a response.

In the post test, no participant chose never or rarely as a response to the statement. Twice as many participants on the pre test, four people, chose sometimes as a response on the post test. The number and percentage of participants that chose usually did not change from the pre test. However, the number of participants who indicated in the pre test they always seek to repair and take responsibility dropped to two people.

This set of data suggests after the instructional sessions there was an overall increase in the number of participants that seek to repair and take responsibility some of the time and usually. While there was a decrease in the number of participants that always seek to repair and take responsibility for any harm to the other person, generally most participants indicated they engaged in the activity in the statement. Even the one participant who chose he or she rarely seek to repair or take responsibility did not chose the same response in the post test.

8. I focus on my side of the conflict only.

Participants responded to this statement in all five categories. The most frequent response was rarely. Twenty-seven or three participants responded they focus on their side of the conflict only. The other participants responded equally among the other responses. Eighteen percent of them responded they never focus on their side of the conflict only. Another eighteen percent or two people responded they sometimes focus on

their side of the conflict only. The final participants responded they always focus on their side of the conflict only.

After the instructional sessions, participant responses shifted. Fifty percent or five participants indicated they rarely focus on their side of the conflict only. Another forty percent of the participants, four people, responded they sometimes focus on their side of the conflict only. One person responded he or she never focuses on their side of the conflict only. There were no participants who responded they usually or always focus on their side on the conflict only.

This set of data suggests before participants attended the instructional sessions the greatest number of participants would not focus on their side of the conflict only. After the instructional sessions there was an increase in the number of participants that rarely focus on their side of the conflict only. There was also an increase in those that focus on their side of the conflict some of the time. Those results are offset by the decrease in the number of participants that indicated they always focus on their side only.

9. I avoid conflict by not making a big deal out of an issue when I know I'm right.

Four participants, or thirty-six percent, indicated they sometimes avoid conflict by not making a big deal out of an issue when they know they are right. Two persons responded they usually avoid conflict by not making a big deal. Another two people responded they always avoid conflict by not making a big deal even when they know they are right. Two more participants chose rarely in response to the statement. One lone participant

indicated he or she never avoids conflict by not making a big deal out of an issue when he or she knows they are right.

During the post test, one participant also indicated he or she never avoids conflict when right. Five people responded they sometimes avoid conflict in that scenario. Forty percent, or four participants said they usually avoid conflict under those circumstances. During the post test, no participant responded they always or rarely avoid conflict by not making a big deal of an issue when they are right.

This set of data suggests that before participants attended the instructional sessions several of them sometimes avoid conflict when they know they are right. After the instructional sessions, there was an increase in the number of participants that responded they avoid conflict even if they know they were right some of the time and usually, meaning most of the time. There was no change in the number of participants that never avoid conflict in this circumstance.

10. I settle my conflicts by compromising.

Almost half, forty-five percent, of the participants responded on the pre test they sometimes settle their conflicts by compromising. Thirty-six percent or four participants indicated they usually settle their conflicts by compromising. One participant responded he or she rarely settle conflict by compromising. The last participant responded he or she never settle conflict by compromising.

On the post test, like the pre test, no participant indicated they always settle their conflicts by compromising. The number of participants who chose never and rarely

remained the same as on the pre test. Four participants responded on the post test they sometimes settle conflicts by compromise. Another four selected usually in response to the statement.

This set of data suggests that before participants attended the instructional sessions several would settle conflicts by compromising some of the time, followed by compromising most of the time. After the instructional sessions there was a decrease in the number of participants that responded they sometimes settle their conflicts by compromising. There was virtually no change in participants' other responses to the statement.

11. I keep talking with the other person until the conflict is mutually resolved.

Five or forty-five percent of the participants responded on the pre test they sometimes keep talking with the other person until the conflict is mutually resolved. Four participants claimed they usually keep talking with the person until the conflict is mutually resolved. The remaining two participants responded they rarely keep talking until the conflict is resolved. No participants responded they always or never keep talking with the other person until the conflict is mutually resolved.

As on the pre test no participants responded on the post test they always or never keep talking. The number of persons who responded they rarely keep talking was five. Four people said they sometimes keep talking. The remaining ten percent of the participants responded they usually keep talking with the other person they are in a conflict with until the matter is mutually resolved.

This set of data suggests that before participants attended the instructional sessions many of them would sometimes and usually keep talking until the conflict was mutually resolved. A couple of participants do not ordinarily keep talking to the person until the conflict is mutually resolved. After the instructional sessions there was an increase in the number of participants that rarely kept talking with the other person until the conflict was resolved. There was a decrease however in the number of participants keep talking some of the time and most of the time as well.

12. I am flexible in a conflict when I care about my relationship with the other person.

The majority of the participants, fifty-five percent of them, indicated on the pre test they were usually flexible in a conflict when they care about the relationship with the other person. Another twenty-seven percent of the participants responded they are sometimes flexible in a conflict when they care about the relationship. The remaining eighteen percent or two people responded they are always flexible when they care about their relationship with the other person.

On the post test, one participant indicated he or she was never flexible in a conflict when they care about the relationship with the other person. Another participant responded he or she was always flexible in that scenario. Six participants that responded they were usually flexible on the pre test remained the same on the post test. The remaining two participants responded they were sometimes flexible in a conflict when they care about the relationship with the other person. As in the pre

test, no participant responded on the post test that they were rarely flexible in a conflict when they care about the relationship with the other person.

This set of data suggests that before participants attended the instructional sessions over half of them considered themselves to be flexible in a conflict most of the time if they cared about the relationship. After the instructional sessions, the number of participants with that same response remained the same. The number of participants that indicated they were flexible some of the time decreased however. One participant indicated he or she was not flexible in a conflict even when they cared about the relationship with the other person.

13. I ask others in the Body of Christ to help resolve my conflicts with other Christians.

The participants most frequently responded they rarely ask others in the Body of Christ for help in resolving conflicts with other Christians. Five participants indicated they rarely ask for such help. Thirty-six percent or four participants responded they sometimes ask others in the Body of Christ to help resolve with other Christians. The remaining two participants responded they usually ask others in the Body of Christ for help in this area.

Of the ten participants who responded to this statement on the post test, half of them responded they rarely ask others in the body of Christ to help resolve their conflicts with other Christians. Two people indicated they sometimes ask others in the Body of Christ while another two people said they usually ask others in the Body

of Christ for help. One participant indicated he or she never asks others in the Body of Christ to help resolve their conflicts with other Christians.

This set of data suggests that before participants attended the instructional sessions many of them did not ordinarily ask others in Body of Christ for help to resolve a conflict with other Christians. Several participants indicated they asked for help some of the time and only a couple indicated they would ask for help most of the time. After the instructional sessions the number of people that ordinarily did not ask for help remained the same while the number of participants that asked for help some of the time decreased. The number of participants that asked for help most of the time remained the same. Unlike in the pre test, one participant indicated he or she never asked others in the Body of Christ to help resolve a conflict with another Christian.

14. I confront people about their faults in a gentle and loving manner.

Forty-five percent of the participants responded on the pre test that they usually confront people about their faults in a gentle way. Four participants, thirty-six percent, indicated they sometimes gently and lovingly confront people about their faults. One person said he or she never confront people about their faults in a gentle and loving manner. The eleventh person who responded to this statement on the pre-test indicated she or he rarely confronts people about their faults in a gentle and loving manner.

Half of the ten participants who completed the post test responded they usually confront people about their faults in a gentle and loving manner. Twenty percent

indicated they sometimes confront people about their faults. Another twenty percent responded they never confront people about their faults. As on the pre test, one individual responded he or she rarely confront people about their faults in a gentle and loving manner. Also as on the pre test, no participant responded they always confront people about their faults in a loving and gentle manner.

This set of data suggests that before participants attended the instructional sessions half of them confronted people about their faults in a loving and gentle manner most of the time and some of the time. After the instructional sessions, the number of participants that most of the time confronted people about their faults in a gentle and loving way remained the same while the number of participants that would do this some of the time decreased. The number of participants that never confronted people about their faults in a gentle and loving manner increased and the number of participants that ordinarily did not do this remained the same.

15. I privately approach and try to make peace with the person I am in conflict with.

Participants' most frequent pre test response to this statement is that they usually privately approach and try to make peace with the person they are in conflict with. Twenty-seven percent or three participants indicated they privately approach a person they are in conflict with and try to make peace. Two people, or eighteen percent responded they always privately approach a person they are in conflict with and try to make peace. No participants indicated they rarely or never approach a person and try to make peace.

The numbers on the post test are similar to those on the pre test. Forty percent or four participants responded they sometimes privately approach a person and try to make peace. Another forty percent indicated they usually try to make peace in that manner. The remaining twenty percent said they always privately approach and try to make peace with the person they are in conflict with. No participant in either the pre or post test indicated they never or rarely privately approach and try to make peace with the person they are in conflict with.

This set of data suggests that before participants attended the instructional sessions over half of them would approach and try to make peace most of the time. After the instructional sessions the number participants that responded they approached a person privately to try to make peace most the time decreased. The number of participants increased that responded they did this some of the time. The number of participants that privately approached a person to try to make peace all of the time remained the same.

16. I respond to conflict according to biblical principles.

Again, only ten of the eleven participants who completed the pre test responded to this statement. Thirty-six percent or four participants responded they sometimes respond to conflict according to biblical principles. Two participants said they usually respond according to biblical principle. Another two percent claimed they always respond to conflict according to biblical principles. The remaining two persons responded they rarely respond to conflict according to Bible principles. No participant responded she or he never respond to conflict according to biblical principles.

As in the pre test, there were also no participants that responded on the post test that they never respond to conflict according to biblical principles. Twenty percent, or two participants said they rarely respond to conflict according to biblical principles. Another twenty percent indicated they always respond to conflict according to biblical principles. Half of the participants responded that they sometimes respond to conflict according to the Bible.

This set of data suggests that before participants attended the instructional sessions many responded to conflict according to biblical principles some of the time. After the instructional sessions there was an increase in the number of participants that responded to conflict according to biblical principles some of the time. There was a decrease in the number of participants that choose most of the time, and the number of participants remained the same who responded they always responded in that manner.

17. I talk about others behind their back instead of going to talk to them.

The majority of the participants, fifty-five percent, responded on the pre test that they rarely talk about others behind their back instead of going to talk to them. Twenty-seven percent responded they never talk about others behind their back instead of going to talk to the person. Another eighteen percent indicated they sometimes talk about others behind their back instead of going to talk to them. No one responded they usually or always talk about others behind their back instead of going to talk to them.

The post test results were identical to the results on the pre test for the usually and always responses to this statement. Four participants responded they never talk about others behind their back instead of going to talk to them. Four other participants responded rarely talk behind others back. Two people indicated they sometimes talk about others behind their back instead of going to talk to them.

This set of data suggests that before participants attended the instructional sessions more than half ordinarily did not talk behind others' back instead of going to talk to them. Several participants indicated they never talk about others. After the instructional sessions there was an increase in the number of participants that never talk about others behind their back. There was a decrease in the number of participants that ordinarily did not talk behind others back. The number of participants remained the same for those that talked behind others back some of the time.

18. I agree with others in order to avoid conflict.

On the pre test, the same number of participants responded they rarely and sometimes agree with others to avoid conflict. Four participants chose each of those responses. Two participants indicated they usually agree with others in order to avoid conflict. One pre test participant responded she or he never agrees with others in order to avoid conflict. No participant responded they always agree with others in order to avoid conflict.

Three participants responded on the post test they never agree with others in order to avoid conflict. Six participants responded they sometimes agree with others in order to avoid conflict. One person indicated he or she usually agrees with others in order to avoid conflict. As on the pre test, no one responded they always agree with others to avoid conflict.

This set of data suggests that before participants attended the instructional sessions there was an even split in the number of participants that rarely agreed with others to avoid conflict and participants that sometimes agreed with others to avoid conflict. After the instructional sessions there was an increase in the number of participants that agreed with others to avoid conflict some of the time and participants that never agreed to avoid conflict. The number of participants that agreed to avoid conflict most of the time decreased.

19. I admit when I am wrong in a conflict.

Fifty-five percent or six of the participants responded on the pre test they usually admit when they are wrong in a conflict. Another thirty-six or four participants indicated they always admit when they are wrong in a conflict. One participant admitted he or she rarely admits he or she is wrong in a conflict. No participant chose sometimes or never to respond to the statement.

On the post test, four participants responded they usually admit when they are wrong in a conflict. Thirty percent or three participants responded they sometimes admit when they are wrong. Another thirty percent indicated they always admit when

they are wrong in a conflict. Again no participant chose never to respond to the statement. And, no participant chose rarely to respond to the statement on the post test.

This set of data suggests that before participants attended instructional sessions many admitted they were wrong most of the time and several participants indicated they admitted they were wrong all of the time. After the instructional sessions, there was an increase in the number of participants that admit they were wrong some of the time. However, there were decreases in the number of participants that admit they were wrong usually or all of the time.

20. I listen to the other person's point of view in a conflict.

Thirty-six percent, or four of the participants responded they sometimes listen to the other person's point of view in a conflict on the pre test. Four more participants responded they usually listen to the other person's point of view. Two people indicated they always listen to the other person's point of view in a conflict. One participant responded he or she rarely listen to the other person's point of view.

On the post test the majority of the participants, sixty percent, responded they usually listen to the other person's point of view in a conflict. Thirty percent of the participants responded they always listen to the other person's point of view. Only one person responded he or she sometimes listen to the other person's point of view in a conflict. No participants chose either never or rarely as responses to the statement.

This set of data suggests that before participants attended instructional sessions many listened to the other person's point of view some of the time and most of the time when in a conflict. After the instructional sessions, over half of the participants indicated they listened to the other person's point of view most of the time. There was an increase in the number of participants that listened all of the time. There was a decrease in the number of participants that listened to the other person's point of view in a conflict some of the time.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, REFLECTION AND CONCLUSION

SUMMARY

Conflict is an inescapable fact of life even in the Church. Conflict among Christians in God's Church, however, must never be allowed to escalate and become a destructive force that ultimately destroys the Church's peace, witness and mission. When it is understood, managed constructively, and responded to from a biblical perspective, conflict becomes an example of what the enemy intended for harm, God can and will turn it around for good. The writer sought to reiterate this theme throughout this work.

The project was designed to equip churches like the project context, Beacon Light Missionary Baptist Church, to not only recognize destructive conflict but to victoriously handle it God's way. The Church must recognize this phenomenon because it kills, steals and destroys. Destructive conflict is the kind of conflict that kills congregations when it causes churches to split. It is the kind of conflict that destroys relationships and leads to lawsuits between pastors and congregations or deacons and pastors. It is the kind of conflict that steals the Church's time, energy, resources and witness.

The project took a multi leveled approach to test the hypothesis. The initial effort consisted of the preached Word. Two sermons about an aspect of conflict and biblical

conflict resolution were preached. It was felt the preached Word was the appropriate vehicle to broach the subject with the congregation.

Next, a focus group was formed using attendees of the annual vacation Bible school. This captive audience was a representative sample of the adult congregation. Many of the group participants had personal experience with the church's conflicts. The project allowed the writer to examine if the project impacted the attitudes of those participants in particular.

A personal conflict style inventory was administered at the initial meeting of the group. The inventory not only allowed the participants to explore their own style of resolving conflict but also to recognize the conflict styles of others. The inventory was a self examination tool and the results were not shared with the group. The next intervention tool utilized was instructional sessions which provided information on the dynamics of conflict, Bible study on the subject, as well as mediation techniques. A pre test and post test instrument was used to measure any changes of attitudes in the participants.

REFLECTION

While the test results indicate there appears to be an increase in the knowledge base of the participants on the subject, the writer believes it would be far reaching to suggest the project was instrumental in changing participant attitudes. Five days is not sufficient time to achieve that result. There needs to be a study course. The project as administered was at best a starting point to achieve the project goals.

The teaching instruments, in particular the sermons, personal conflict style inventory and instructional sessions were effective means to convey information to the group. The writer would have loved to include role playing to the instructional sessions to add a practical component to the sessions. Again, there just was not sufficient time to thoroughly cover the material.

The writer would also narrow down the number of intervention vehicles. It may have been more helpful to measure the impact of just a series of sermons on the participants; or just an extended Bible study; or even a few seminars on mediation skills building. In concentrating on a single vehicle, one would be able to measure the effectiveness of any one particular tool.

The writer proposes one final thought in replicating a similar project especially in an African American Baptist context. One may want to devise a methodology that utilizes a systems approach to investigate and understand the phenomena of conflict in that particular genre. Such an approach may shed light on whether the system of Baptist polity with its unique characteristics, influences and failures may be the underpinning that contributes to church conflict.

CONCLUSION

As a result of this project the writer is even more passionate about the responsibility of the Church to step up and demonstrate to the world the divine way to manage conflict. After all, we are the head and not the tail. It is not acceptable or pleasing to God for Christians to flaunt their dirty laundry in the courts of this land.

The research deflated the writer's notion that there must not be a lot of information or guidance to help Christians in this area. There is a plethora of information on biblical conflict resolution models. The Holy Scriptures are clear on how Christians are to respond in conflictive situations. A practicing Christian has no better example to follow than our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ when in the midst of a dispute.

With such guidance, the issue for any practicing Christian has never been what we should do. This leaves the writer to conclude we Christians either do not want to do as Christ commands or we do not know how. The writer concedes there are people who profess to be Christians in the first category. Despite their profession of faith, in reality these individuals thrive on destructive conflict. They do not hesitate to use ungodly tactics to achieve their selfish ambitions. And, they have no intentions to do the right thing. As previously discussed in Chapter Two, G. Lloyd Rediger called people who stir up such unhealthy conflict to be either, antisocial, schizoid with narcissistic personalities or just evil.

When one finds him or herself involved in a dispute with such people, one cannot be naïve. God still requires a practicing Christian to be wise and to earnestly follow the teaching in Matthew 18: 15-17 or Titus 3:10-11. However, when combative individuals refuse to follow the Lord's edicts to resolve conflict in a biblical manner, the battle becomes the Lord's. The Lord calls the obedient Christian to separate oneself from such individuals. The Lord may chose to use the legal system to protect God's people. In reality, a Christian may have to seek injunctions, restraining orders or any other remedy or protection at law when engaged in conflict with a disobedient Christian.

The project will not succeed in those type conflicts because the participants are not mutually seeking God's will in the situation. On the other end of the spectrum, in situations where Christians have a desire to do things God's way but just do not know how to resolve conflict in a biblical manner, the project will provide the needed knowledge, wisdom and anointing to do God's will. The parties in dispute will be blessed because of their obedience.

In a final exercise, the writer asks all readers of the project to put on their spiritual eyeglasses and use their Holy Ghost imaginations as we revisit the Hallelujah Missionary Baptist Church to see what God did there. Pastor Jones preached a series of sermons on Christian unity and reconciliation. A conflict resolution ministry was formed to assist members when they find themselves in conflict with each other. The ministry members sought training to prepare themselves for the work of the ministry. The ministry gave a seven week Bible study and seminar to teach the congregation and church leadership how to resolve conflict God's way.

Pleased with their efforts, the Lord blessed the congregation for their obedience. Imagine the results. The possibilities of what God can do in the midst of conflict are limitless. Sister Sally and Sister Martha attended the seminar and reconciled their relationship. They are friends and continue to join together to do mighty work for the Lord.

Deacon Henry and Deacon Smith were convicted regarding their ungodly behavior toward each other. They both resolved to be better leaders and examples of what happens when you turn a problem over to the Lord. They joined together, prayed and

counseled their children. Their children reconciled their marriage. They joined the conflict resolution ministry to assist others bound by conflict.

Sister Sherry, Elder Kerry and Brother Larry decided to stop their mumbling and grumbling. They had learned in the conflict resolution seminar how to lovingly approach the choir director with their concerns. The choir director apologized for making such abrupt changes and asked for their help in making the choir the best it could be. Together the choir reached a compromise on the kinds of music that would bless everyone. The choir director was blessed and formed a great appreciation of some of those old time hymns to get through some recent hard times.

The Trustees were convicted and realized their actions were tearing the church apart. They dropped the idea of a lawsuit and decided to find a better way to resolve the issue. They fervently prayed together and asked God for direction. The group was led to meet with the Pastor to discuss their concerns and to reason together for a solution. Pastor Jones explained that the Lord had directed Hallelujah to help the Narcotics Anonymous group and show them the reconciling love of God. Pastor Jones listened to the Trustees concerns and reminded them God did not give them a spirit of fear. God was using Hallelujah to minister to a group of people no one wanted around. God would protect the church for its obedience. The Trustees now understood the pastor's actions. The Lord used Hallelujah Missionary Baptist Church to lead many in the group to Christ. When Christians decide to resolve their differences God's way, God can and will make us victorious over our conflict.

APPENDIX A

ANGER MANAGEMENT – GOD'S WAY!

ANGER MANAGEMENT – GOD'S WAY!

In this passage, we discover keys to diffusing our anger and be in peace with God and his people.

James 1:19–22 (KJV)
God wants his people to triumph over their trials and to live in obedience to his commandments.

19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

1. **Be quick to listen** - avoid angry situations. Assume the position of a listener.

Proverbs 18:13 (NASB95)He who gives an answer before he hears, It is folly and shame to him.

2. **Be slow to speak** – Weigh your words carefully.; be silent until we have understood the message; show restraint so we don't produce hasty ill-timed reactions.

Proverbs 17:27–28 He who restrains his words has knowledge, And he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding. 28Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is considered wise; When he closes his lips, he is considered prudent.

- Thinks before he talks, is even tempered

Proverbs 29:20 (NASB95)Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

3. **Be slow to anger**

20 For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.
The anger of man does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.

How can we hear God if we're distracted with resentment, hatred or a vengeful attitude?

Anger wastes our energy, produce divisions, and often comes from selfish ambition.
God's righteousness demands taking the high road.
Proverbs 29:22 An angry man stirreth up strife, And a furious man aboundeth in transgression.

Angry person stirs up dissension and a hot tempered one commits many sins.
Moses murdered out of anger and had to leave home.

- Our anger prevents the unsaved world from seeing our God. How can the world look at the conduct of fighting Christians and expect to serve the same God?

[21] ***Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.***

The command

1. Accept the word planted in you. **Humbly receive the word of God** – Submit to the Word as the final authority and guide for your life.

- In our obedience we show humillity

The prerequisite

2. **Get rid of moral filth and evil-** When distracted by sin, we cannot dedicate ourselves to controlling our anger.

- Superfluity of naughtiness - Overabundance; excess of Evil
- engraft – to plant firmly; to join together

The Incentive!

3. **The word planted in your can save you.** – Submit to the Word as the final authority and guide for your life.

David committed adultery with Bathsehba and planned to kill her husband (2 Sam 11). He refused to acknowledge his sin until the prophet Nathan confronted him. David came to his senses and repented. We see his response in Psalm 51 where he:

1) Asked for mercy 2) acknowledged his sin, 3) pleaded for cleansing and 4) asked for spiritual renewal.

If you do get angry.

1. Admit it
2. Ask God for help
3. Confess to those you hurt or offended
4. Ask for spiritual renewal

Ephesians 4: 26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: 27 Neither give place to the devil.

[22] ***But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.***

APPENDIX B

PRAYING FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

PRAYING FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

I RECENTLY READ ABOUT A FRUSTRATED AND EXASPERATED MOTHER WHO SENT HER DISOBEDIENT LITTLE BOY TO HIS ROOM FOR TIME OUT. WHEN HIS TIME WAS UP, HE CAME BACK INTO THE KITCHEN WHERE HIS MOTHER WAS. HE SAID YOU KNOW MOM, I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT WHAT I DID AND HOW IT MADE YOU SO MAD AND I SAID A PRAYER. EXCITED THAT HER SON HAD REFLECTED ON THE ERROR OF HIS WAYS, THE LITTLE BOY'S MOM SAID THAT WAS EXCELLENT AND JUST LIKE I TOLD YOU, IF YOU ASK GOD TO MAKE YOU A GOOD BOY, HE WILL HELP YOU. THE LITTLE BOY TURNED TO HIS MOTHER AND SAID, OH I DIDN'T ASK GOD TO HELP ME BE GOOD, I ASKED HIM TO HELP YOU PUT UP WITH ME!

THERE WAS ANOTHER STORY ABOUT A LITTLE BOY WHO WAS ATTENDING CHURCH WITH HIS FAMILY. THE CONGREGATION KNEW THIS LITTLE BOY TO SOMETIMES CAUSE PROBLEMS AND HAVE TO BE TAKEN OUT OF THE SERVICE. SO ON THIS PARTICULAR SUNDAY WHEN THE LITTLE BOY WAS ESPECIALLY LOUD AND BOISTEROUS, HIS FATHER SWOOPED HIM UP AND STARTED TOWARD THE DOOR. NO ONE PAID TOO MUCH ATTENTION TO THIS FAMILIAR SCENARIO UNTIL THE LITTLE BOY CRIED OUT, YA'LL PLEASE PRAY FOR ME NOW!

THE COMMON ELEMENT IN EACH OF THE STORIES IS PRAYER. EACH OF THOSE LITTLE BOYS FOUND THEMSELVES IN THE MIDST OF A

CONFLICT. EACH ONE RESORTED TO PRAYER TO BRING THEM OUT. THIS IS WHAT OUR MESSAGE IS ABOUT TODAY: PRAYING FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION. OUR TEXT WILL COME FROM PHILIPPIANS 4:2-7

IF WE ARE BEING HONEST, MOST PEOPLE, IF THEY EVEN THINK TO PRAY AT ALL DURING TIMES OF CONFLICT, WE PRAY FOR OURSELVES. WE PRAY FOR VICTORY OVER THE SITUATION. WE PRAY FOR A PERSONAL ADVANTAGE. BUT HOW MANY OF YOU KNOW THE BIBLE LEADS US IN ANOTHER DIRECTION.

IN JOHN 17: 13-15, JESUS PRAYED TO THE FATHER, "I HAVE GIVEN THEM (MEANING THE APOSTLES) YOUR WORD AND THE WORLD HATES THEM." JESUS WENT ON TO SAY, "MY PRAYER IS NOT THAT YOU TAKE THEM OUT OF THE WORLD BUT THAT YOU PROTECT THEM FROM THE EVIL ONE." MIND YOU JESUS DIDN'T ASK THE FATHER TO KNOCK THEIR ENEMIES OUT OR THAT THEIR ENEMIES BE REMOVED. HE SIMPLY PRAYED FOR THEIR PROTECTION FROM THE EVIL ONE. KNOWING THAT THEY WOULD FACE HATRED AND CONFLICT, JESUS JUST ASKED THE FATHER TO PROTECT THEM. WHAT JESUS WANTED AND ASKED FOR THE APOSTLES, HE WANTS AND ASKED FOR US AS WELL. IN VERSE 20 JESUS PRAYED THAT HIS PRAYER WAS NOT JUST FOR THE APOSTLES BUT FOR ALL WHO WILL BELIEVE IN HIM.

JESUS PRAYED FOR US. HE PRAYED THAT CHRISTIANS BE A PEOPLE UNITED, NOT DIVIDED. HIS WORDS ARE THAT WE BE BROUGHT TO

COMPLETE UNITY. HE DESIRES UNITY IN HIS BODY, THE BODY OF CHRIST, SO THAT THE WORLD WILL KNOW THAT GOD SENT JESUS AND LOVED HIM AND THAT GOD LOVES THEM EVEN AS HE LOVES CHRIST JESUS.

FRANCIS SCHAEFFER WROTE IN HIS BOOK, "THE MARK OF THE CHRISTIAN", THAT THE BEST FORM OF EVANGELISM WAS FOR CHRISTIANS TO GET ALONG. HE WROTE FURTHER THAT CONTINUAL, PERSISTENT, UNRESOLVED CONFLICT BETWEEN CHRISTIANS HAS THE EXACT OPPOSITE IMPACT ON THE WORLD FROM WHAT GOD DESIRES. WHEN CHRISTIANS ALLOW CONFLICT TO TEAR US APART, WE ALSO DESTROY OUR EFFECTIVENESS AS AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST.

NOW THAT WE CHRISTIANS KNOW THAT WE SHOULD PRAY IN THE MIDST OF CONFLICT, THE QUESTION BECOMES "HOW WE CAN PRAY REGARDING CONFLICT RESOLUTION"? WE CAN LOOK AT OUR SCRIPTURE TEXT FOR THE ANSWER. WE WILL LOOK AT EUODIA (YOO-O-DEE-UH) AND SYNTYCHE (SIN-TIH-KEH) THE TWO CHURCH LADIES IN PHILIPPIANS 4: 2-7.

BEFORE WE LOOK AT THESE LADIES LETS LOOK AT SOME BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE PHILIPPIAN CHURCH. IT WAS A STRONG CHURCH AND PAUL HAD MANY GOOD THINGS TO SAY ABOUT THEM. IN CHAPTER ONE, VERSE 5 THE APOSTLE PAUL TELLS US THIS CHURCH WAS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH HIM IN THE GOSPEL. BUT, EVEN THOUGH IT WAS A GREAT CHURCH, IT WASN'T PERFECT. PROBLEMS HAD INFILTRATED THE CHURCH. THE TEXT DOESN'T TELL US NECESSARILY

WHAT THE PROBLEMS WERE. BUT PAUL WAS CONCERNED ENOUGH TO WRITE TO THE CHURCH ABOUT THE NEED FOR UNITY AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION. FURTHER DOWN IN CHAPTER ONE, VERSES 9 – 10, HE PRAYS THAT THE PHILIPPIANS ABOUND MORE AND MORE IN THE KNOWLEDGE AND DEPTH OF INSIGHT SO THAT THEY WOULD BE ABLE TO DISCERN WHAT IS BEST AND PURE AND THAT THEY BE BLAMELESS UNTIL THE DAY OF CHRIST.

IN THE FIRST FOUR VERSES OF CHAPTER 2 PAUL URGES THE PHILIPPIANS TO BE LIKE MINDED, ONE IN SPIRIT AND ONE IN PURPOSE. IN VERSES 5 – 11, PAUL TOLD THEM THEY NEEDED TO DEVELOP AN ATTITUDE LIKE THAT OF CHRIST. HE ENCOURAGED THEM TO CONTINUE TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING. AND THEY SHOULD DO EVERYTHING WITHOUT COMPLAINING OR ARGUING IN VERSES 12 – 16.

IN CHAPTER THREE, PAUL TELLS THE PHILIPPIANS TO REJOICE, NOT TO HAVE ANY CONFIDENCE IN THEIR FLESH. HE ENCOURAGES THEM TO LIVE UP TO WHAT WE HAVE ALREADY ATTAINED IN VERSE 16.

NOW WE GET TO CHAPTER FOUR. ALL THROUGHOUT HIS LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS, PAUL PROVIDED MANY PRINCIPLES FOR BUILDING GREAT RELATIONSHIPS AND RESOLVING CONFLICT. NOW IN CHAPTER FOUR HE ADDRESSES THE TWO CHURCH LADIES. APPARENTLY THEIR CONFLICT, IF NOT AT THE HEART OF THE PHILIPPIAN PROBLEM, WEIGHED

HEAVY ENOUGH ON PAUL'S HEART THAT HE FELT THE NEED TO INTERVENE DIRECTLY. IN PAUL'S HANDLING OF THIS CONFLICT BETWEEN EUODIA(YOO-O-DEE-AH) AND SYNTYCHE(SIN-TIH-KEH) GOD USES PAUL TO TEACH THE PHILIPPIANS AND US ON HOW TO CHANGE BEHAVIOR BEFORE INTERPERSONAL PROBLEMS THREATEN LONG TERM DAMAGE IN CHRISTIAN RELATIONSHIPS. REACTING TO CONFLICT WITHOUT GOD'S HELP CAN ESCALATE THE PROBLEM. TODAY WE WILL LEARN FIVE LESSONS. THE FIRST FOUR TELL US HOW CHRISTIANS SHOULD RESPOND TO ONE ANOTHER IN THE MIDST OF A CONFLICT CRISIS. THE FIFTH LESSON TELLS US HOW CHRISTIANS SHOULD PRAY WHEN THEY FIND THEMSELVES IN A CONFLICT.

LESSON 1

WE FIND PAUL'S FIRST LESSON IN CHAPTER 4 VERSE 2. HE WROTE, "I PLEAD WITH (YOO-0-DEE-AH) AND I PLEAD WITH (SIN-TIH-KEH) TO AGREE WITH EACH OTHER IN THE LORD." THE PHRASE "AGREE WITH EACH OTHER IN THE LORD " IS TRANSLATED BY J.B. PHILLIPS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT IN MODERN ENGLISH AS "TO MAKE UP YOUR DIFFERENCES AS CHRISTIANS SHOULD." PAUL WAS STRESSING, IF THESE 2 CHURCH LADIES WERE GOING TO GET PAST THEIR CONFLICT, THEY WOULD HAVE TO WORK THROUGH THEIR DIFFERENCES FOR THE SAKE OF THEIR DEVOTION TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. TRUE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER MUST ALWAYS WIN OUT OVER PRIDE.

LESSON 2

PAUL'S SECOND LESSON STARTS IN VERSE 3. HE WRITES "YES AND I ASK YOU, LOYAL YOKEFELLOW, HELP THESE WOMEN WHO HAVE CONTENDED AT MY SIDE IN THE CAUSE OF THE GOSPEL, ALONG WITH CLEMENT AND THE REST OF MY FELLOW WORKERS, WHOSE NAMES ARE IN THE BOOK OF LIFE." PAUL IS TEACHING HERE THAT THESE TWO LADIES MIGHT NEED SOME HELP WITH THEIR CONFLICT RESOLUTION. SO HE CALLED AND THEIR FELLOW SAINTS TO HELP THEM. HE CALLED ON SOMEONE HE CALLED HIS ROYAL YOKEFELLOW TO HELP THEM.

LESSON 3

PAUL'S THIRD LESSON IS FOUND IN THE NEXT 2 SENTENCES IN VERSES 4 AND 5. HE WROTE, "REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS, I WILL SAY IT AGAIN: REJOICE!" PAUL WANTED TO REMIND THE CHURCH LADIES TO REMEMBER THEIR COMMON ROOTS. HE WAS REMINDING THEM OF THE NEED TO REJOICE IN THE LORD. THIS WAS A MAIN POINT. PAUL RECOGNIZED THAT WHILE THESE LADIES WERE PROBABLY NOT IN THE MOOD TO CELEBRATE ONE ANOTHER, THEY BOTH COULD AND SHOULD TAKE THEIR JOY IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO JESUS. PAUL WAS TEACHING THEM THAT IT SHOULD NOT COME AS A SURPRISE TO EITHER OF THEM THAT NEITHER OF THEM WAS PERFECT. PROBLEMS CAN BE EXPECTED AND CONFLICT IS GOING TO COME INTO OUR LIVES AND RELATIONSHIPS.

BUT THEY ONLY SERVE TO SHOW US THAT WE ARE ALL IN NEED OF A SAVIOR.

LESSON 4

THE FOURTH LESSON HAS TO DO WITH BEING GRACIOUS IN A TIME OF CONFLICT. PAUL WROTE IN VERSE 5, "LET YOUR GENTLENESS BE EVIDENT TO ALL. THE LORD IS NEAR." THE WORD GENTLENESS HAS BEEN TRANSLATED AS "FORBEARANCE, FAIRNESS, GRACIOUSNESS, CONSIDERATENESS AND MAGNANIMOUS." LET'S LOOK AT THE DEFINITIONS OF THE LAST TWO. CONSIDERATENESS MEANS THOUGHTFULNESS CONCERNING THE RIGHTS AND FEELINGS OF OTHERS. MAGNANIMOUS HAS TO DO WITH THE LOFTINESS OF SPIRIT ENABLING ONE TO BEAR TROUBLE CALMLY, TO DISDAIN MEANNESS AND REVENGE AND TO MAKE SACRIFICES FOR WORTHY ENDS.

PAUL'S MESSAGE IN THIS LESSON IS CLEAR. INSTEAD OF FIGHTING, THE CHURCH LADIES NEEDED TO EXHIBIT GENTLENESS TO ONE ANOTHER.

LESSON 5

PAUL'S' FIRST FOUR LESSONS TEACHES THE CHURCH HOW TO BEHAVE TOWARD ONE ANOTHER IN THE MIDDLE OF CONFLICT. NOW IN HIS FIFTH LESSON, PAUL TEACHES US THAT IF OUR BEHAVIOR IS GOING TO RISE ABOVE OUR PERSONAL DIFFERENCE, WE MUST TRUST GOD. WE MUST TRUST GOD ABOUT EVERYTHING INCLUDING ONE ANOTHER AND

ONE ANOTHER'S ISSUES. IN VERSE 6, PAUL TELLS US, "DO NOT BE ANXIOUS ABOUT ANYTHING, BUT IN EVERYTHING, BY PRAYER AND PETITION, WITH THANKSGIVING, PRESENT YOUR REQUEST TO GOD. AND THE PEACE OF GOD WHICH TRANSCENDS ALL UNDERSTANDING, WILL GUARD YOUR HEARTS AND YOUR MINDS IN CHRIST JESUS."

THE CHURCH LADIES PROBABLY THOUGHT PAUL WAS OFF HIS ROCKER. HOW COULD HE EXPECT THEM NOT TO BE ANXIOUS WHILE THEY WERE IN THE MIDDLE OF SUCH A FIGHT? THEY PROBABLY SAID WE JUST CAN'T TURN OFF OUR EMOTIONS. THEY WERE DEALING WITH A HIGHLY EMOTIONAL ISSUE. PAUL EXPLAINS THAT AS CHRISTIANS, WE DON'T HAVE TO BE ANXIOUS. WE HAVE IMMEDIATE ACCESS TO GOD THROUGH PRAYER. GOD CAN CERTAINLY CALM A TROUBLED HEART. HE IS GREAT AND MIGHTY AND IN CHARGE. WE ARE NOT. ONLY HE CAN CHANGE HEARTS AND MINDS. WE NEED HIM TO CHANGE OURS.

PAUL WANTED THESE CHURCH LADIES AND US TO KNOW AND HAVE NO DOUBTS THAT WHEN WE ARE FACED WITH CONFLICT MUCH OF THE BATTLE CAN AND SHOULD BE MET THROUGH PRAYER. WHEN FACED WITH CONFLICT, WE NEED TO TALK TO GOD ABOUT IT. WE NEED TO TELL HIM THE NATURE OF OUR PROBLEM, NOT THAT HE NEEDS TO BE INFORMED BUT BECAUSE WE HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM. WE NEED TO THANK HIM FOR HIS INVOLVEMENT IN THE CONFLICT, WE NEED TO

THANK HIM FOR HIS WISDOM, FOR OUR ACCESS TO HIM, THANK HIM FOR HIS PEACE IN THE MIDST OF THE CONFLICT.

PAUL WAS TELLING (YOO-O-DEE-UH) INSTEAD OF BEING ANXIOUS WHERE (SIN-TIH-KEH) IS CONCERNED, PRAY ABOUT YOUR SITUATION WITH HER. AND THE SAME THING FOR YOU (SIN-TIH-KEH). PAUL WAS TELLING THEM TO TALK TO GOD BOUT THE PROBLEM BEFORE THEY TALK TO OTHERS OR EVEN TALK TO EACH OTHER.

PAUL WAS TELLING THEM TO PRAY AS HE TAUGHT IN THE FIRST LESSON: ASK GOD TO HELP THEM HAVE THE MIND OF CHRIST, TO BE LOVING AND TO BE DONE WITH PRIDE. HE TELLS THEM TO ASK GOD TO GIVE THEM A THIRD PARTY, LIKE THE LOYAL YOKEFELLOW HE TAUGHT ABOUT IN HIS SECOND LESSON WHO MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP THEM TO MEDIATE THE TROUBLE BETWEEN THEM. PAUL TOLD THEM IF THEY COULDN'T FIND JOY IN EACH OTHER RIGHT NOW THEN LET THEIR JOY IN CHRIST RULE EVERYTHING THEY DID OR SAID. AS HE TAUGHT IN HIS FOURTH LESSON, PAUL TOLD THE LADIES TO ASK GOD FOR THE STRENGTH TO BE GENTLE TO EACH OTHER AND FINALLY PAUL TELLS THE LADIES, THESE SISTERS IN CHRIST, TO ASK GOD TO EASE THEIR ANXIETY, MAKE THEIR PETITIONS KNOWN AND TO REMEMBER TO GIVE GOD THANKS FOR EACH OTHER. PAUL WANTED THEM TO REMEMBER AND TO THANK GOD FOR THE MINISTRY GOD HAD USED THEM TO ACCOMPLISH TOGETHER. PAUL WANTED THEM BOTH TO PRAY ABOUT THEIR

SITUATION; TO GIVE THANKS FOR ONE ANOTHER; TO GIVE THANKS THAT GOD SAW FIT TO SAVE THE OTHER PERSON; TO THANK GOD THAT HE MADE THE OTHER PERSON IN HIS IMAGE; AND TO THANK GOD THAT HER SISTER IN CHRIST WILL INHERIT ALL THE BLESSINGS OF GOD.

CAN YOU IMAGINE WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN IF BOTH THOSE LADIES FOLLOWED THROUGH ON THAT KIND OF PRAYER. CAN YOU IMAGINE WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF YOU AND THOSE YOU RELATE TO DETERMINE TO PRAY LIKE THIS IF AND WHEN YOU ARE FACED WITH CONFLICT? LIKE OUR LORD, WE MUST PRAY THAT EVERYONE INVOLVED WITH THE CONFLICT WILL BE PROTECTED FROM THE ENEMY. AS CHRISTIANS WE SHOULD PRAY THAT UNITY IS OF GREATER VALUE TO EVERYONE INVOLVED THAN OUR PERSONAL DIFFERENCES.

WELL BEACON LIGHT, NOW WE KNOW WHEN FACED WITH CONFLICT, WE HAVE A CHOICE. WE CAN REACT WITHOUT THINKING. WE CAN NOT PRAY. WE CAN ENGAGE OUR OPPONENT IN OUR OWN STRENGTH. WE CAN OPEN THE DOOR FOR THE ENEMY TO COME IN TO KILL, STEAL AND DESTROY CHRISTIAN RELATIONSHIPS. WE CAN DIMINISH OUR WITNESS AND MISS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE WORLD TO SEE THE TRUTH ABOUT GOD. OR… WE CAN WAIT TO RESPOND, PRAY. ASK GOD TO HELP US VALUE THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THAT PERSON MORE THAN THE ISSUE CAUSING THE CONFLICT. WE CAN ASK GOD TO HELP US AND THE OTHER

CHRISTIAN TO NEGOTIATE A SOLUTION TO THE CONFLICT IN A WAY THAT IS PLEASING TO GOD.

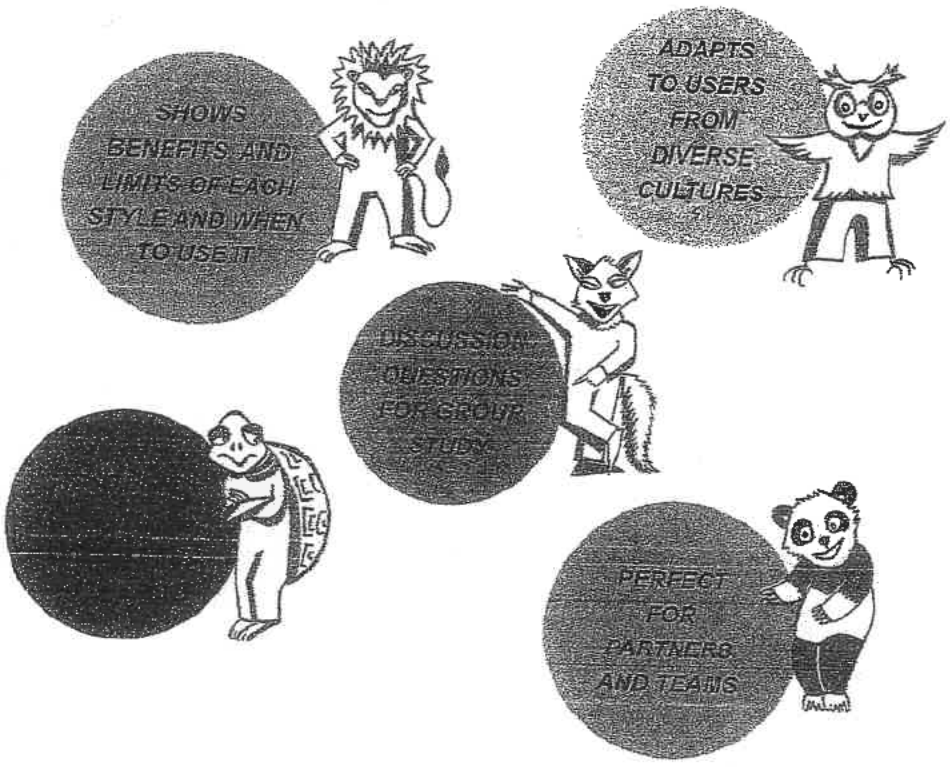
I PRAY SOMETHING HAS BEEN SAID THAT WILL ENRICH YOUR LIFE IN CHRIST AND HELP PREPARE YOU TO DEAL WITH THE CONFLICTS IN YOUR LIFE.

APPENDIX C

THE KRAYBILL CONFLICT STYLE INVENTORY

Style MATTERS

The Kraybill Conflict Style Inventory


SHOWS BENEFITS AND LIMITS OF EACH STYLE AND WHEN TO USE IT
ADAPTS TO USERS FROM DIVERSE CULTURES
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR GROUP STUDY
PERFECT FOR PARTNERS AND TEAMS

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Calm Settings

When I first discover that differences exist and feelings are not yet high. . .

A. So long as feelings are still under control,
I push to bring our differences out into the open and try to find a solution that benefits both of us.

B. If the disagreement has not escalated to a high level,
I focus on achieving what is important to me rather than worrying about what's important to the other person.

C. When feelings are still low-key,
I look for a compromise that gives each of us a little of what we want.

D. I try to head off trouble before it begins by steering away from difficult issues.

E. In a mild disagreement,
I am likely to go along with the other person's wishes in order to keep things peaceful.

F. When I am in a disagreement but my emotions are not yet fully aroused,
I give priority to harmony and set aside my personal preferences as necessary to achieve peace.

G. When the disagreement is still low-key,
I put as much effort into understanding the other side's views as I put into explaining my own.

H. If tension is not yet high,
I focus more on making sure that my opinions are heard than on keeping the other person happy.

I. In the early stage when people are not yet upset,
I deal with differences by finding ways to postpone the discussion.

J. When emotions are not yet high,
I deal with differences by offering to give up some things in exchange for others.

Storm Settings

If differences persist and feelings escalate, what do you do then?

K. If the conflict gets heated,
I make a lot of effort to get us to work together in finding a solution that we are both happy with.

L. As emotions rise,
I focus more on my goals and less on how others feel about things.

M. When feelings escalate in an argument,
I seek a solution where both parties win some and lose some.

Storm Settings (cont'd)

If differences persist and feelings escalate, what do I do?

H. When I am upset in a disagreement,
I withdraw from discussion so that neither side gets what they want.

G. If the conflict gets too intense,
I prefer to set aside my needs and let the other person have what they want rather than threaten our relationship.

F. When an argument gets really intense,
I decide that the differences aren't worth all the hassle and drop the discussion.

E. If the conflict gets intense,
My attention goes to strategies to get what is important to me rather than to protecting the relationship.

D. When things get heated, I let the other person have their way.

C. When an argument gets really intense,
I put a lot of effort into advancing the conversation in such a way that it meets everyone's goals.

B. When tempers are high,
I try to move on by seeking a deal that gives everyone some but not all of what they want.

Now go to the next page and tally your results.

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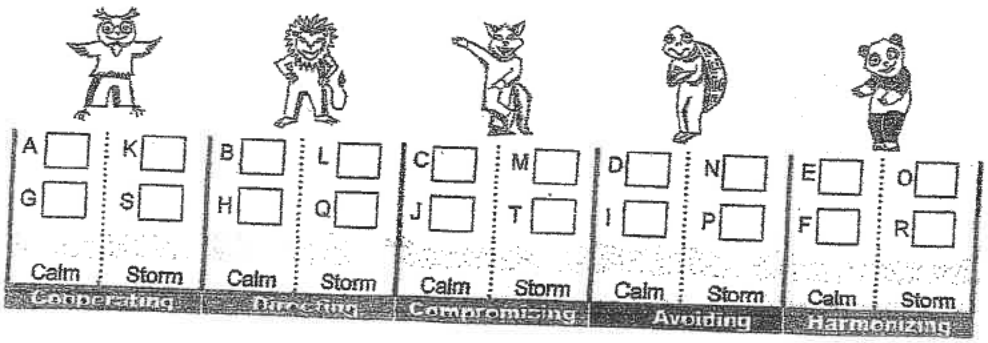
Style Inventory Tally Sheet

When you have answered all the questions, transfer the number you chose for each question to the chart below. For example, on question A, if you circled 1, write 1 on the line beside A in the chart below. When you have transferred all the numbers, add them in each column, A+G, K + S, etc., and enter the total for each column in the gray box.



Now tranfer your score totals from the gray box above and the style names they are with to the columns below, placing them in order from highest score to lowest.

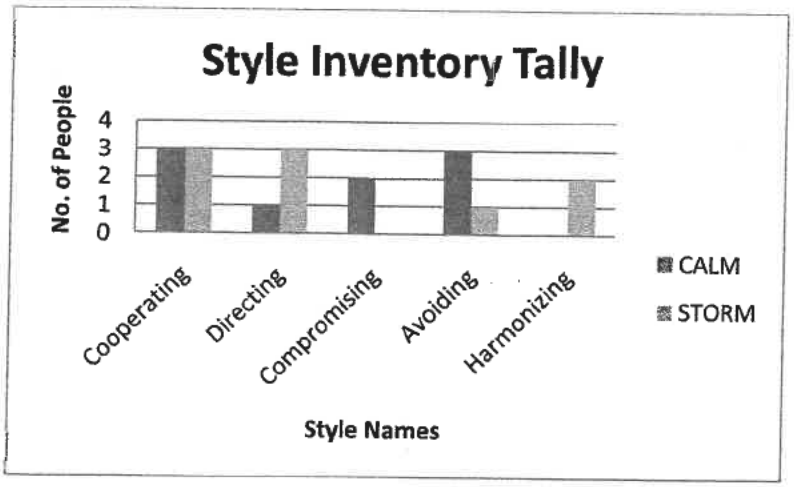
Calm Response when issues or conflicts first arise.	**Storm** Response when things escalate or stress rises.
^ Highest Calm Score ^ Style Name	^ Highest Storm Score ^ Style Name
2nd Style Name	2nd Style Name
3rd Style Name	3rd Style Name
4th Style Name	4th Style Name
5th Style Name	5th Style Name

APPENDIX D

STYLE INVENTORY TALLY

STYLE INVENTORY TALLY

Nine (9) participants completed the Style Inventory Tally Sheet to identify their conflict management responses when a conflict first arises (CALM) and when things escalate or stress when rises in a conflict (STORM).



The highest response rating when participants were calm were Cooperating and Avoiding. The highest response rating when participants were storming were Cooperating and Directing.

APPENDIX E

THE CHRISTIAN CONFLICT RESOLUTION INVENTORY

CHRISTIAN CONFLICT RESOLUTION INVENTORY

The truth is that the Church and Christians are not exempt from conflict. Brothers and sisters in Christ do not always agree with each other about everything. The blessing is that when Christians do have conflict, there are clear commands in the Word of God for them to follow that will guide them through the conflict. This inventory is designed to help a practicing Christian examine his or her attitudes and present practices in dealing with personal conflict with another Christian. After biblical conflict resolution training, this inventory will again be administered to determine if there is any change in attitudes or practices as a result of the training.

CHRISTIAN CONFLICT RESOLUTION INVENTORY

LEGEND:

1 = Never: does not ever occur

2 = Rarely: does not ordinarily occur

3 = Sometimes: does occur on various occasions

4 = Usually: does occur most of the time

5 = Always: does occur every time

PLEASE USE THE ABOVE LEGEND TO ENTER THE NUMBERED FREQUENCY THAT BEST DESCRIBES WHAT YOU, AS A PRACTICING CHRISTIAN, DO WHEN INVOLVED IN A DISPUTE WITH A FELLOW CHRISTIAN BROTHER OR SISTER.

1. _____ I respond to the person I am in conflict with in a way that is different than the world does.
2. _____ I pray before I speak when involved in a conflict.
3. _____ I focus on the harm the conflict may have on my relationship with the other person.
4. _____ I focus on how I might glorify God in a conflict.
5. _____ I immediately forgive and do not dwell on the incident when someone offends me or treats me wrong.
6. _____ I first examine myself to determine my contribution to the conflict.
7. _____ I seek to repair and take responsibility for any harm to the other person involved in the conflict.

8. _____ I focus on my side of the conflict only.

9. _____ I avoid conflict by not making a big deal out of an issue when I know I'm right.

10. _____ I settle my conflicts by compromising.

11. _____ I keep talking with the other person until the conflict is mutually resolved.

12. _____ I am flexible in a conflict when I care about my relationship with the other person.

13. _____ I ask others in the Body of Christ to help resolve my conflicts with other Christians.

14. _____ I confront people about their faults in a gentle and loving manner.

15. _____ I privately approach and try to make peace with the person I am in conflict with.

16. _____ I respond to conflict according to biblical principles.

17. _____ I talk about others behind their back instead of going to talk to them.

18. _____ I agree with others in order to avoid conflict.

19. _____ I admit when I am wrong in a conflict.

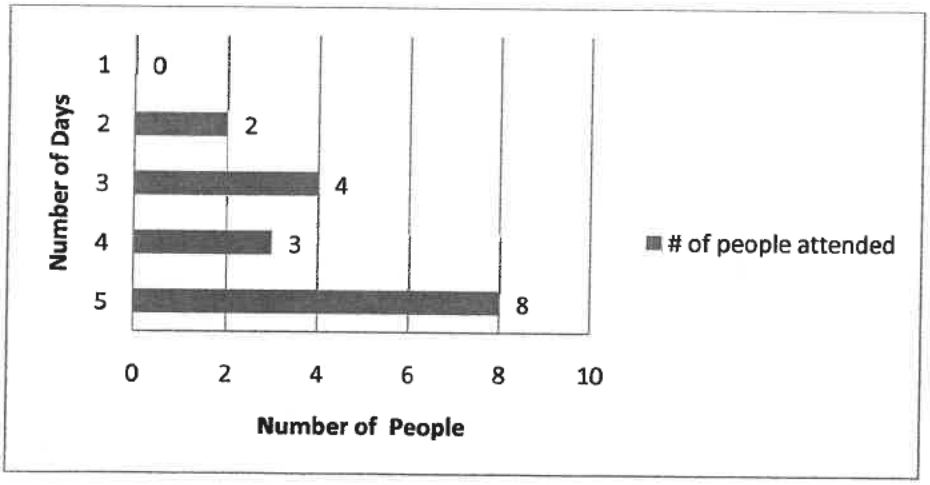
20. _____ I listen to the other person's point of view in a conflict.

APPENDIX F

ATTENDANCE ANALYSIS

ATTENDANCE ANALYSIS

The course was comprised of one hour sessions that were given on five (5) consecutive days from June 21st – 25th, 2010. Seventeen (17) people attended the course throughout the week. As the chart below indicates, eight (8) of the seventeen participants attended all five (5) sessions. Three participants attended four (4) days of the course. Four (4) persons attended three (3) days of the course and two (2) persons attended two days of the course.



Seven (7) of the participants were male and ten (10) of the participants were female.

APPENDIX G

CHRISTIAN CONFLICT RESOLUTION INVENTORY PRE TEST RESULTS

CHRISTIAN CONFLICT RESOLUTION INVENTORY PRE TEST RESULTS

Eleven (11) participants, in total, took the Pre-Assessment Conflict Resolution Inventory. Eight (8) of these participants also took the Post-Assessment Conflict Resolution Inventory after attending the instructional sessions. Three (3) participants did not take the Post-Assessment Conflict Resolution Inventory. The chart below shows the results of the Pre-Assessment Inventory. It shows the number of people that chose each rating for each question.

Question	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Usually (4)	Always (5)
1	0	0	6	3	2
2	2	2	3	2	2
3	0	1	5	3	2
4	0	1	4	3	3
5	0	0	5	5	1
6	0	2	3	2	4
7	0	1	2	4	4
8	2	3	2	2	2
9	1	2	4	2	2
10	1	1	5	4	0
11	0	2	5	4	0
12	0	0	3	6	2
13	0	5	4	2	0
14	1	1	4	5	0
15	0	0	3	6	2
16	0	2	4	2	2
17	3	6	2	0	0
18	1	4	4	2	0
19	0	1	0	6	4
20	0	1	4	4	2

APPENDIX H

CHRISTIAN CONFLICT RESOLUTION INVENTORY POST TEST

CHRISTIAN CONFLICT RESOLUTION INVENTORY POST TEST RESULTS

Ten (10) participants, in total, took the Post-Assessment Conflict Resolution Inventory. Two (2) of these participants did not take the Pre-Assessment Conflict Resolution Inventory, but attended instructional sessions. The chart below shows the results of the Post-Assessment Inventory. It gives you the number of people that chose each rating for every question.

Question	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Usually (4)	Always (5)
1	0	0	2	6	2
2	0	1	6	2	1
3	0	0	3	4	3
4	0	0	3	3	4
5	0	2	5	2	1
6	0	1	6	1	2
7	0	0	4	4	2
8	1	5	4	0	0
9	1	0	5	4	0
10	1	1	4	4	0
11	0	5	4	1	0
12	1	0	2	6	1
13	1	5	2	2	0
14	2	1	2	5	0
15	0	0	4	4	2
16	0	2	5	1	2
17	4	4	2	0	0
18	3	0	6	1	0
19	0	0	3	4	0
20	0	0	1	6	3

APPENDIX I

CHRISTIAN CONFLICT RESOLUTION INVENTORY ITEM ANALYSIS

CHRISTIAN CONFLICT RESOLUTION INVENTORY ITEM ANALYSIS

The charts below represent the responses of the participants to each question before they received instructional sessions (pre) and after they received instructional sessions (post).

1. ***I respond to the person I am in conflict with in a way that is different than the world does.***

	Never (1)	**Rarely (2)**	**Sometimes (3)**	**Usually (4)**	**Always (5)**
Pre	0	0	55% (6)	27% (3)	18% (2)
Post	0	0	20% (2)	60% (6)	20% (2)

This set of data suggests that before the participants attended the instructional sessions, they settled conflicts in a way the world does most of the time. Several participants indicated they respond as the world does most of the time and a couple most always responds as the world does. After the instructional sessions, there was an increase in the number of participants that indicated they would settle conflicts differently than the world does. There was a decrease in the number of participants that would settle conflicts differently some of the time and the number of participants that would respond differently all the time remained the same.

2. ***I pray before I speak when involved in a conflict.***

	Never (1)	**Rarely (2)**	**Sometimes (3)**	**Usually (4)**	**Always (5)**
Pre	18% (2)	18% (2)	27% (3)	18%(2)	18% (2)
Post	0	10% (1)	60% (6)	20% (2)	10% (1)

This set of data suggests that before participants attended the instructional sessions several participants pray before entering into a conflict some of the time while the number of participants that choose the remaining ratings were the same. After the

instructional sessions, there was an increase in the number of participants that indicated they would pray some of the time. Less people indicated they would pray most of the time and would not ordinarily pray before a conflict. The number of participants that would most likely pray before a conflict remained the same.

3. ***I focus on the harm the conflict may have on my relationship with the other person.***

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Usually (4)	Always (5)
Pre	0	9% (1)	45% (5)	27% (3)	18% (2)
Post	0	0	30% (3)	40% (4)	30% (3)

This set of data suggests that before participants attended the instructional sessions almost half of would consider the harm conflict would have on a relationship some of the time while some participants consider it most of the time and a few consider it all of the time. After the instructional sessions there was an increase in the number of participants that would consider the harm conflict would have on a relationship most of the time and all of the time. There was a decrease in the number of the participants that would consider the harm in a relationship some of the time.

4. ***I focus on how I might glorify God in a conflict.***

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Usually (4)	Always (5)
Pre	0	9% (1)	36% (4)	27% (3)	18% (2)
Post	0	0	30% (3)	30% (4)	40% (4)

This set of data suggests that before participants attended the instructional sessions they would focus on glorifying God in a conflict sometimes more than most of the time or all of the time. After the instructional sessions the participants indicated they would

seek to glorify God when in a conflict most of the time and more would strive to glorify Him all of the time.

5. ***I immediately forgive and do not dwell on the incident when someone offends me or treats me wrong.***

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Usually (4)	Always (5)
Pre	0	0	45% (5)	45% (5)	9% (1)
Post	0	20% (2)	50% (5)	20% (2)	10% (1)

This set of data suggests that before participants attended the instructional sessions almost half of them would forgive immediately and not dwell on the conflict some of the time while the other half would forgive and not dwell on the conflict most of the time. One participant would always forgive and not dwell on the incident. After the instructional sessions a few participants indicated they do not immediately forgive and dwell on the conflict and half would forgive and not dwell on the conflict some of the time. The remaining participants indicate they would forgive and not dwell on the incident most of the time and one would do it all of the time.

6. ***I first examine myself to determine my contribution to the conflict.***

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Usually (4)	Always (5)
Pre	0	18% (2)	27% (3)	18% (2)	36% (4)
Post	0	10% (1)	60% (6)	10% (1)	20% (2)

This set of data suggests before participants attended the instructional sessions many of the participants examine themselves to determine their contribution to the conflict while several of them examine themselves some of the time. The same number of participants examine their contribution to the conflict most of the time and do not ordinarily examine themselves. After the instructional sessions, over half of the

participants indicated they would examine their contribution to the conflict some of the time and a few would examine themselves all of the time. The remaining participants would examine themselves most of the time and the other would not ordinarily examine their contribution to the conflict.

7. ***I seek to repair and take responsibility for any harm to the other person.***

	Never (1)	**Rarely (2)**	**Sometimes (3)**	**Usually (4)**	**Always (5)**
Pre	0	10% (1)	18% (2)	36% (4)	36% (4)
Post	0	0	40% (4)	40% (4)	20% (2)

This set of data suggests before participants attended the instructional sessions the same number of participants seek to repair and take responsibility for harm to the other person all of the time and most of the time. A couple of the participants would sometimes seek to repair and take responsibility while one participant would not ordinarily seek to repair and take responsibility for the other person. After the instructional sessions there was an increase in the number of participants that would seek repair and take responsibility some of the time while the number of participants that would seek repair and take responsibility remained the same. There was a decrease in the number of participants that would always seek to repair and take responsibility for any harm to the other person.

8. ***I focus on my side of the conflict only.***

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Usually (4)	Always (5)
Pre	18% (2)	27% (3)	18% (2)	18% (2)	18% (2)
Post	10% (1)	50% (5)	40% (4)	0	0

This set of data suggests before participants attended the instructional sessions the greatest number of participants would not focus on their side of the conflict only. The remaining participants tied in their chosen ratings. After the instructional sessions there was an increase in the number of participants that would not focus on their side of the conflict only and those that would focus on their side of the conflict some of the time. There was a decrease in the number of participants that focusing on their side only would never occur, that they would focus on their side most of the time and they would focus on their side all of the time.

9. ***I avoid conflict by not making a big deal out of an issue when I know I'm right.***

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Usually (4)	Always (5)
Pre	9% (1)	18% (2)	36% (4)	18% (2)	18% (2)
Post	10% (1)	0	50% (5)	40% (4)	0

This set of data suggests that before participants attended the instructional sessions that several of them would avoid conflict when they know they are right some of the time. One participant indicated they would never avoid this kind of conflict if they know they are right. The remaining ratings had the same number of participants choose them. After the instructional sessions, there was an increase in the number of participants that would avoid conflict if they knew they were right some of the time and most of the time.

There was no change in the number of participants that would never avoid this kind of conflict.

10. I settle my conflicts by compromising.

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Usually (4)	Always (5)
Pre	9% (1)	9% (1)	45% (5)	36% (4)	0
Post	10% (1)	10% (1)	40% (4)	40% (4)	0

This set of data suggests that before participants attended the instructional sessions several would settle conflicts by compromising some of the time, followed by compromising most of the time. No one indicated they settled their conflicts all of the time by compromising and the remaining ratings had the same number of participants choose them. After the instructional sessions there was a decrease in the number of participants that would settle their conflicts by compromising. There was an increase in the number of participants that would compromise most of the time. There was no change in the number of participants for the remaining ratings.

11. I keep talking with the other person until the conflict is mutually resolved.

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Usually (4)	Always (5)
Pre	0	18% (2)	45% (5)	36% (4)	0
Post	0	50% (5)	40% (4)	10% (1)	0

This set of data suggests that before participants attended the instructional sessions many of them would keep talking until the conflict mutually resolved some of the time followed by talking with the person most of the time and a couple of participants do not ordinarily keep talking to the person until the conflict is mutually resolved. After the instructional sessions there was an increase in the number of participants that would not ordinarily keep talking with the other person until the conflict is resolved. There is also a

decrease in the number of participants that would keep talking some of the time and most of the time as well.

12. I am flexible in a conflict when I care about my relationship with the other person.

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Usually (4)	Always (5)
Pre	0	0	27% (3)	55% (6)	18% (2)
Post	10% (1)	0	20% (2)	60% (6)	1

This set of data suggests that before participants attended the instructional sessions over half of them would be flexible in a conflict if they cared about the relationship most of the time. A few participants would be flexible some of the time and a couple indicated they would be flexible all of the time when they cared about the relationship with the other person. After the instructional sessions the number of participants that would be flexible most of the time remained the same. The number of participants that would be flexible some of the time decreased and one participant indicated they would not be flexible in a conflict when they cared about the other person.

13. I ask others in the Body of Christ to help resolve my conflicts with other Christians.

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Usually (4)	Always (5)
Pre	0	45% (5)	36% (4)	18% (2)	0
Post	10% (1)	50% (5)	20% (2)	20% (2)	0

This set of data suggests that before participants attended the instructional sessions many of them would not ordinarily ask others in Body of Christ to help resolve a conflict with other Christians. Several participants indicated they would ask for help some of the time and only a couple indicated they would ask for help most of the time. After the

instructional sessions the number of people that would not ordinarily ask for help remained the same while the number of participants that would ask for help some of the time decreased. The number of participants that would ask for help most of the time remained the same and one participant indicated they would never ask others in the Body of Christ to help resolve a conflict with another Christian.

14. I confront people about their faults in a gentle and loving manner.

	Never (1)	**Rarely (2)**	**Sometimes (3)**	**Usually (4)**	**Always (5)**
Pre	9% (1)	9% (1)	36% (4)	45% (5)	0
Post	20% (2)	10% (1)	20% (2)	50% (5)	0

This set of data suggests that before participants attended the instructional sessions half of them would confront people about their faults in a loving and gentle manner most of the time. Several participants would confront others gently and lovingly about their faults some of the time. The number of participants that would not ordinarily do this or never do this was the same. After the instructional sessions the number of participants that would most of the time confront people about their faults in a gentle and loving way remained the same while the number of participants that would do this some of the time decreased. The number of participants that would never confront people about their faults in a gentle and loving manner increased and the number of participants that would not ordinarily do this remained the same.

15. I privately approach and try to make peace with the person I am in conflict with.

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Usually (4)	Always (5)
Pre	0	0	27% (3)	55% (6)	18% (2)
Post	0	0	40% (4)	40% (4)	20% (2)

This set of data suggests that before participants attended the instructional sessions over half of them would approach and try to make peace most of the time. Several participants try to make peace some of the time and a couple of participants do this most to the time. After the instructional sessions the number participants that would approach a person privately and try to make peace most the time decreased and the number of participants that would do this some of the time increased. The number of participants that would privately approach a person and try to make peace all of the time remained the same.

16. I respond to conflict according to biblical principles.

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Usually (4)	Always (5)
Pre	0	18% (2)	36% (4)	18% (2)	18% (2)
Post	0	20% (2)	50% (5)	10% (1)	20% (2)

This set of data suggests that before participants attended the instructional sessions many would respond to conflict according to biblical principles some of the time. The number of participants that choose the remaining ratings were the same. After the instructional sessions there was an increase in the number of participants that would respond to conflict according to biblical principles some of the time. There was a decrease in the number of participants that choose most of the time, and the number of participants remained the same for the other ratings

17. I ***talk about others behind their back instead of going to talk to them.***

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Usually (4)	Always (5)
Pre	27% (3)	55% (6)	18% (2)	0	0
Post	40% (4)	40% (4)	20% (2)	0	0

This set of data suggests that before participants attended the instructional sessions more than half would not ordinarily talk behind others' back instead of going to talk to them. Several participants indicated they would never talk about others and a couple of participants indicated they would talk behind others' back some of the time. After the instructional sessions there was an increase in the number of participants that would never talk about others' behind their back. There was a decrease in the number of participants that would not ordinarily talk behind others' back and the number of participants remained the same for those that would talk behind others' back some of the time.

18. I agree with others in order to avoid conflict.

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Usually (4)	Always (5)
Pre	9% (1)	36% (4)	36% (4)	18% (2)	0
Post	30% (3)	0	60% (6)	10% (1)	0

This set of data suggests that before participants attended the instructional sessions the same number of participants would agree with other to avoid conflict and would not ordinarily agree with others to avoid conflict. A couple of participants indicated they would never agree with others to avoid conflict and one participant indicated they would not agree in order to avoid conflict. After the instructional sessions there was an increase in the number of participants that would agree with others to avoid conflict some of the

time and participants that would never agree to avoid conflict. The number of participants that would agree to avoid conflict most of the time decreased.

19. I admit when I am wrong in a conflict.

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Usually (4)	Always (5)
Pre	0	9% (1)	0	55% (6)	36% (4)
Post	0	0	30% (3)	40% (4)	30% (3)

This set of data suggests that before participants attended instructional sessions many would admit they were wrong most of the time and several participants indicated they would all of the time. One participant indicated they would not ordinarily admit they were wrong. After the instructional sessions, there was a decrease in the number of participants who admit they were wrong during a conflict. There was an increase in the number of participants that would admit they were wrong some of the time and a decrease in the number of participants that would admit they were wrong all of the time.

20. I listen to the other person's point of view in a conflict.

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Usually (4)	Always (5)
Pre	0	9% (1)	36% (4)	36% (4)	18% (2)
Post	0	0	10% (1)	60% (6)	30% (3)

This set of data suggests that before participants attended instructional sessions many would listen to the other person's point of view some of the time and most of the time. A couple of participants would listen to the other person most of the time and one participant indicated they would not ordinarily listen to the other person's point of view. After the instructional sessions, over half of the participants indicated they would listen to the other person's point of view most of the time. There was an increase in the number of

participants that would listen all of the time. There was a decrease in the number of participants that would listen to the other person's point of view in a conflict some of the time.

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